



Commission on the  
Integration of  
Refugees

# From Arrival to Integration:

Building Communities for  
Refugees and for Britain

MARCH 2024





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The Woolf Institute, which convened and funded the Commission, is a global leader in the academic study of relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and is recognised around the world for the excellence of its research, teaching, policy and public education programmes.

It aims to answer practical and theoretical questions concerning aspects of identity, culture, and practice using multidisciplinary approaches with research, teaching and public education staff from a wide range of academic backgrounds. The Institute strives, in its research and outreach, to demonstrate how greater understanding of commonality and difference can inform and enhance the Public Good.

[www.woolf.cam.ac.uk](http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk)



Good Faith Partnership are a consultancy firm dedicated to fostering understanding, collaboration, and positive change across three key areas: Migration, Faith and Society, and Interfaith and International issues. Their high-quality research and consultancy support is born out of years of experience in the design and delivery of innovative solutions to migrant inclusion policy and practice.

[www.goodfaith.org.uk](http://www.goodfaith.org.uk)



The Care Policy and Evaluation Centre (CPEC), London School of Economics and Political Science, is a leading international research centre, primarily working on long-term care (social care), mental health, developmental disabilities, and other health issues to inform and influence policy, practice, and theory globally.

[www.lse.ac.uk/cpec](http://www.lse.ac.uk/cpec)



Neighbourly Lab is a non-profit research and innovation organisation with a mission to increase social connection and strengthen community resilience around the UK. Their thematic areas of focus include: what works to best welcome newcomers to a place, how to drive effective engagement with often lesser-heard communities, the social determinants of health outcomes, and how to develop and build social infrastructure all over the country.

[www.neighbourlylab.com](http://www.neighbourlylab.com)

# Foreword



Almost everyone agrees – from the current government to the voluntary sector, as well as refugees and asylum seekers themselves – that the UK asylum system is broken. Producing practical, ethical and economically-costed responses, with integration at the centre, has been the task of The Commission on the Integration of Refugees, an independent Commission convened by the Woolf Institute.

The Commissioners represent a wide range of views and divergent positions, including across the political divide. But all strive for a society where everyone – including refugees – feels welcome and part of a strong, cohesive community. They include people with lived experience of being a refugee and asylum seeker. I am grateful to them all, and to the many hundreds who have contributed to the Commission. Biographies of all Commissioners can be found at the end of this report.

The Commission demonstrates that it is possible to find common ground and that these issues can be debated and consensus found without antagonism and hostility. Agreement is possible to secure a new deal for refugees in the UK, one that is fair, deliverable and accountable. A deal that works for everyone, both refugees and wider British society.

At the same time as this report, the Commission is publishing six appendices (details of these, with a QR code are found on page 7 of this report) which provide further information as well as the evidence for the Commission’s findings. On behalf of the Commission, I commend this work to you and to all policy makers across the political spectrum, government officials as well as all those engaged in the asylum sector and the wider public.



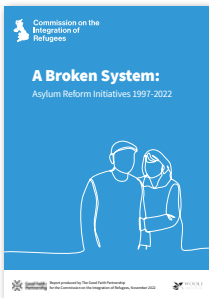
Dr Ed Kessler MBE  
Chair

# Research Pillars

Between 2022 and 2023, the Commission commissioned and conducted a series of interrelated research projects. Reports documenting this research are available on the Commission website via the QR code and are listed below.

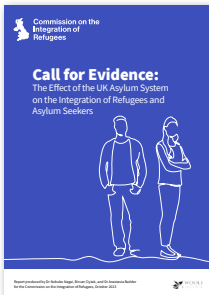
In addition, the Commission conducted numerous small group meetings with a variety of stakeholders and civil society actors. Individuals and organisations who gave evidence are listed at the end of this report.

The six supporting research reports are:



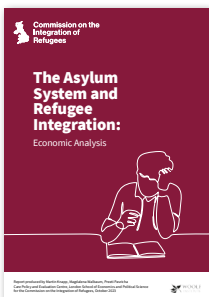
## Asylum Reform Initiatives 1997-2022

The Good Faith Partnership reviewed asylum reform initiatives in the UK from 1997 to 2022, primarily assessing the efforts of central government, but also paying attention to significant initiatives led by local or devolved government, and by the voluntary sector. This report was initially published in October 2022, and has been republished in March 2024 with a new appendix incorporating policy changes from October 2022 to January 2024.



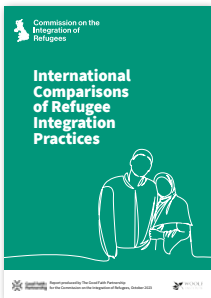
## Call for Evidence: The Effect of the UK Asylum System on the Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The Commission issued a Call for Evidence between November 2022 and April 2023 on the UK refugee and asylum system, receiving 210 responses, of which 68 (40%) were current or former refugees and asylum seekers. The Call was co-produced by the commissioners along with a number of stakeholders, and widely disseminated amongst relevant stakeholder networks, as well as through the Commission website. Submissions were solicited from integration service providers, policy experts, lived experience voices, and the general public.



## Economic Analysis

The Care Policy and Evaluation Centre (CPEC) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) developed a financial model to estimate the economic implications of different approaches to the integration of refugees and to cost the Commission's key recommendations. Their report calculates costs and benefits using data from a wide range of sources, including central government, independent bodies, private organisations, and existing academic research.



## International Comparisons

The Good Faith Partnership conducted a review of international policy and practice on the issue of refugee and asylum seeker integration, comprising a review of examples from countries comparable to the UK from Europe, the Americas, and Australasia.



## Local Engagement Hearings

The Commission conducted eight hearings with local policymakers, stakeholders, civil society, and lived experience voices across the UK, in the following locations:

- |                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Birmingham, 28 November 2022       | Glasgow, 26 April 2023   |
| London, 6 March 2023               | Hereford, 15 May 2023    |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 21 March 2023 | Cardiff, 3 October 2023  |
| Manchester, 30 March 2023          | Belfast, 2 November 2023 |



## Survey of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

The Neighbourly Lab independent research agency conducted a quantitative survey of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as 20 stakeholder interviews and 11 in-depth qualitative interviews. The survey was translated into 10 languages and distributed through community researchers and in partnership with civil society organisations across the devolved nations of the UK, reaching 1,189 people, of which 755 responses were complete enough for analysis.



To view these reports online scan the QR code or visit [www.refugeeintegrationuk.com/publications](http://www.refugeeintegrationuk.com/publications)

# Commission on the Integration of Refugees

## Summary

The UK's asylum system is broken: it is expensive, ineffective, and harmful. There is a desperate need for new ideas on how to create a system that works effectively and enjoys public consent. Taking up this challenge, the Commission on the Integration of Refugees has undertaken the most significant and detailed exploration of the UK asylum system in a generation. Our work has shown that it is possible to find solutions and to build political consensus around them.

Based on six pillars of research, including evidence from more than 1,250 individuals and organisations, the Commission – with its diversity of experience and political perspectives – has been able to achieve full or near-consensus around 16 recommendations to shape a new future for the UK's asylum system based on integration.

approach is also necessary to unlock the economic benefits projected by the LSE. The three main conditions for this are that the government needs to meet its target to process asylum applications within six months (meaning people can work from this point), and that asylum seekers receive English language provision from day one and access to employment support from six months.

The second is localisation of delivery. At the heart of our recommendations is a new settlement for refugees delivered through 'local integration partnerships'. These would put devolved governments, regional and local authorities, and communities in control of resources and delivery in order to create the best possible conditions for integration. The national government would play a coordinating role, including setting overall numbers.

**In the last 25 years, the UK government has consistently prioritised policy around migration management over policies designed to enhance the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.**

An integration-based asylum system can deliver benefits not only for refugees but for wider society – from contributing to tackling the housing crisis and homelessness to promoting economic flourishing. The recommendations are underpinned by a financial model developed by the London School of Economics, which found that the benefits outweigh the costs within three years, and that they would yield a net economic benefit to the country of at least £1.2 billion within five years.

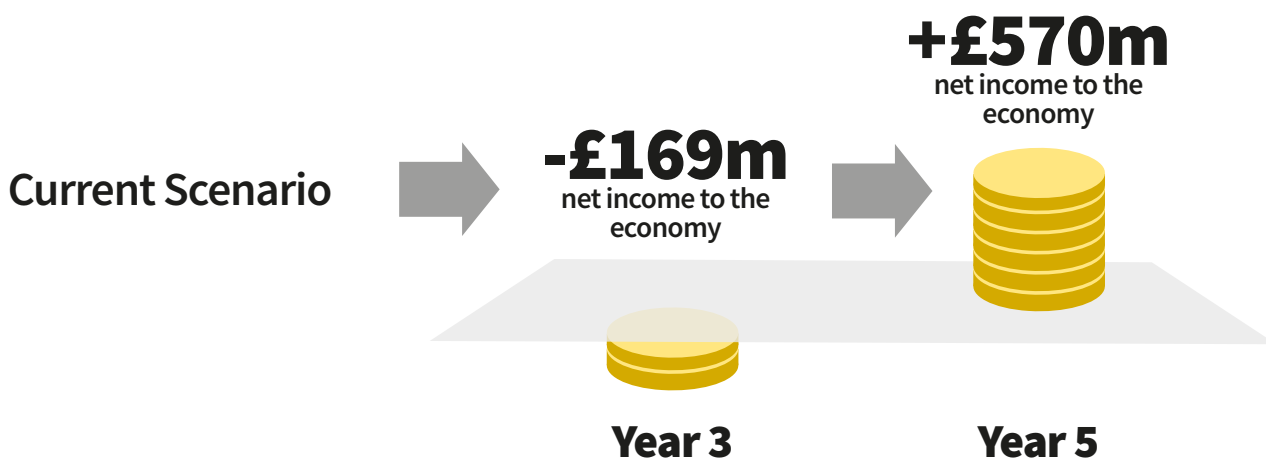
There are two core elements to our proposals. The first is that our recommendations are designed to be mutually reinforcing and their impact will be greater if they are taken together. A coherent and holistic

There is an abundance of good practice available to guide this shift towards localisation, including from the devolved national governments of Scotland and Wales, but also from other local authorities in the UK, from other countries, and from the success of initiatives including the community sponsorship and Ukrainian refugee settlement programmes.

The solutions we are proposing would not only be more effective than the current system, but cheaper, more coherent, more in tune with the values of compassion and fairness that so many people manifest towards asylum seekers, and capable of delivering long-term economic benefits and positive social outcomes both for refugees and wider British society.



## Economic Benefit of Changes Proposed by the Commission



## Proposed Scenario

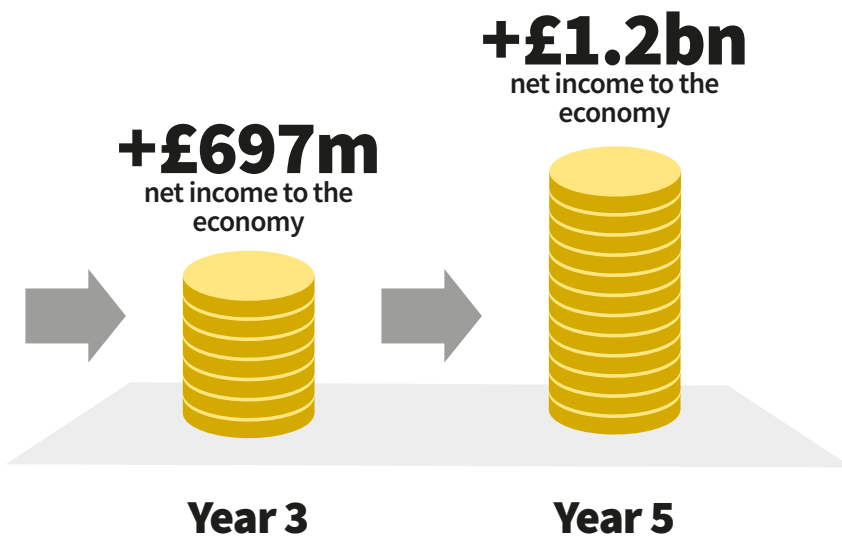
Processing applications within six months (and people being able to work from six months)



Employment support from six months



Free English classes from arrival



# Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to the government of the UK. They are intended to form an integrated whole rather than a set of individual options, since their efficacy will depend on the others also being implemented. Some of them are directed at specific government departments or agencies, but the Commission envisages that a coordinated approach across Whitehall will be necessary.

1. Devolve asylum and refugee resettlement support systems in a “New Settlement for Refugees”. This calls for a whole system approach to put local integration partnerships in the driving seat of refugee integration.

The “New Settlement for Refugees” should consist of four strands that represent an evidence-driven, coordinated, and systematic approach to integration across all levels:

- i) Carrying out a radical devolution of the asylum and refugee resettlement systems to local level – underpinned by strong local integration partnerships, Combined Authorities and devolved nations – wherein all resources for asylum and resettlement are controlled and invested locally.

- ii) Putting in place a new statement of goals for national refugee integration policy by the UK government and UK devolved nations’ governments.

- iii) Revising and upgrading Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) as the key vehicles overseeing this strategy on the ground.

- iv) Putting in place strong governance and improved channels for democratic accountability and oversight with people with first-hand experience as refugees at its heart.

*Below: Women taking part in an activity at Brushstrokes Community Project.*



© Graham Oakes

2. Develop a comprehensive Resettlement Scheme drawing on best practice and experience from recent and current programmes, including the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine, the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).
3. Deliver housing through local integration partnerships, led by local authorities, to ensure that central government and independent sector resources are invested in the expansion of accommodation in communities, some of which would be reserved for refugees and asylum seekers. This would be beneficial to the whole population in need of housing, as well as to refugees and asylum seekers.
4. Extend the transition period for asylum seekers to “move on” after being given leave to remain as refugees from 28 days to 56 days.
5. Only use detention as a last resort and as a precursor to rapid removal where genuine absconding and/or security risks cannot otherwise be managed. Case-management alternatives offer better value for money, have been demonstrated to work, and are more humane. Children should not be detained under any circumstances.
6. Avoid moving refugees and asylum seekers to different accommodation (after their initial placement) without their consent, unless there are exceptional circumstances, as this will impede their meaningful integration.
7. Provide refugees and asylum seekers with access – free of charge – to English Language provision from day one after they arrive in the UK, with local integration partnerships empowered to commission language provision to suit local needs.\*
8. Enable all refugee and asylum-seeking children to access mainstream education immediately, no matter when they arrive in the school year. Schools and colleges should be incentivised to provide appropriate education and support.
9. Provide language access/assistance to all refugees and asylum seekers for the initial six-month period after arrival.
10. Ensure that appropriate pathways are in place for refugees and asylum seekers to meet their full educational potential by recognising qualifications and providing access to further and higher education.
11. Make people in the asylum system eligible for general employment after six months of waiting for their asylum decision. This eligibility should not be limited to the jobs on the Shortage Occupation List.
12. Make people in the asylum system eligible for jobs on the Shortage Occupation List from day one. Consideration should be given to a Government-backed finance scheme to assist those granted refugee status who wish to set up in business.\*
13. Create a programme of employment support for all refugees and those asylum seekers who are allowed to work.
14. Provide a “Welcome to the UK” pack for all refugees and asylum seekers upon arrival, learning from and building on existing examples.
15. Establish more Welcome Hubs, bringing together the local community, local government, and civil society.
16. Carry out Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (through collaboration between the NHS executive and civil society, including charities, faith groups, and diaspora organisation) to increase understanding of the composition and needs of local refugees and asylum seekers. Findings should inform the planning, development, and offering of relevant, inclusive, and responsive care systems that improve health and address health inequalities.

\*The commissioners agreed unanimously on all the recommendations, except recommendations 7 and 12, which were supported by 21 of the 22 commissioners.

# Introduction

## 1.1. A “Broken” System

The current UK refugee and asylum system is not fit for purpose. According to the Home Secretary at the time of the formation of the Commission on the Integration of Refugees, the asylum system is “fundamentally broken”.<sup>1</sup> We would add that it is also unethical, inefficient, and costly to the taxpayer.

For the past 25 years, the UK government has consistently prioritised policy around migration management over policies designed to enhance the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>2</sup> This is demonstrated by a lack of a national unified integration policy, beyond the Home Office’s Indicators of Integration (2019),<sup>3</sup> and the differential provision of services across local authorities (LAs) and devolved administrations, as well as an over-reliance on hotel accommodation and private contractors. As a

The UK needs a functioning refugee and asylum system that enables individuals to create new, meaningful lives for themselves and minimises public spending. Migration is an issue that is not going away, and will only become more pressing in the next few decades as more and more people flee their homes following geopolitical instability and climate change. At the end of 2021, less than 10% of the world’s refugees were living in Europe.<sup>7</sup> By the end of 2022, however, largely as a result of the war in Ukraine, the share of refugees in Europe (including the UK) increased to 20%.<sup>8</sup> The UNHCR estimates global forced displacement to be at an all-time high, with the number of forcibly displaced people having doubled over the past decade. By May 2023, the global figure exceeded 110 million people forced to flee persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, public

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result, the UK has an ineffective, slow, and piecemeal system, in which asylum seekers are barred from accessing work and employment opportunities and instead have to rely on public funds. This prevents them from being able to contribute to British society and increases the strain on public resources.<sup>4</sup>

The most recent Home Office figures show that the cost of the current UK asylum system reached £3.96 billion in the 12 months to the end of June 2023, up from £2.12 billion in the same period a year earlier.<sup>5</sup> This figure is likely to increase in 2024, given the fact that the Home Office employed close to 1,000 extra asylum caseworkers between June and September 2023 in order to help clear the “legacy backlog” of unprocessed asylum claims.<sup>6</sup>

opinion on refugees and asylum seekers remains highly polarised, stalling serious efforts to think up new ways to improve the system.<sup>10</sup> Not addressing the evidence and seriously considering ways to address the inefficiencies within the current system would represent a missed opportunity that will have significant negative repercussions for UK society. According to the economic model designed for the Commission by the London School of Economics, the total net economic benefit of implementing just two of our recommendations on English language and employment support is over £1.2 billion by the end of year five.





Key to having a functioning refugee and asylum system is the efficient and fair processing of asylum claims. At the end of December 2023 there were 95,252 asylum claims awaiting an initial decision (including remaining backlog cases), with the majority of applications taking as long as 18 months.<sup>11</sup> Increasing the efficiency of dealing with asylum applications should be seen as the first step in improving the current system. Our recommendations are founded on the assumption that all asylum decisions should be made within six months (the government's own target), and our focus is on what should be done in tandem with the speeding up of asylum decisions in order to promote integration at all levels of society.

to underperforming sectors. The better integration of refugees and asylum seekers also has the potential to provide immediate economic benefit to the taxpayer by reducing government spending on refugee and asylum support.

Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK are currently afforded different rights and responsibilities, depending on whether an individual gained refugee status by applying for asylum having arrived in the UK irregularly, or by arriving through a refugee resettlement or community sponsorship scheme. This has resulted in what is widely referred to as a “two-tier system”, in which individuals are treated differently depending on their status and mode of arrival despite

### **At a local level, integrating refugees can provide benefits for all members of the community, from civil society to businesses, healthcare, and public services.**

This report outlines a real opportunity to effect meaningful and long-lasting change by creating a fair, streamlined, and effective refugee and asylum system. It sets out a practical, evidence-based, and coherent plan to overhaul the current refugee and asylum system through a focus on *integration* as a pathway to building a stronger, more resilient, and economically flourishing Britain. Drawing on a diverse evidence base, with the voices of those with lived experience at its heart, this report proposes a holistic integration package that would expedite the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, economically costed to produce public benefits by the end of the second year.

#### **1.2. The Solution: A Focus on Integration**

The successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers has been shown to impact society positively at individual, local, and national levels. At an individual level, positive integration experiences impact directly on refugee wellbeing and may also alleviate the effects of prior trauma.<sup>12</sup> At a local level, integrating refugees can provide benefits for all members of the community – from civil society to businesses, healthcare, and public services. Integration also enhances social cohesion and builds stronger, more inclusive, and culturally diverse communities.<sup>13</sup> At a national level, integration provides an opportunity to grow and diversify the labour force by tapping into refugee talent and bringing economic benefits

having similar needs and capabilities (and sometimes coming from the same country of origin). While integration strategies in the devolved nations (most notably Scotland and Wales) operate on a principle of “integration from day one”, integration initiatives in England are mostly geared towards those who have already been granted refugee status and do not apply to asylum seekers. In 2000, the Government launched a first attempt at a national refugee integration plan – “Full and Equal Citizens: A Strategy for the Integration of Refugees into the United Kingdom” – which was intended to help refugees (but not asylum seekers) to secure access to jobs, accommodation, welfare benefits, health, education and language services, and to encourage community participation. This strategy has now lapsed, and despite producing new Indicators for Integration in 2019, no official equivalent has been developed or implemented.

Evidence shows that policies designed to tap into refugee and asylum seeker talent, promote social inclusion, and facilitate opportunities for employment, language learning, and skill acquisition have the potential to reduce the economic and social burden of the current asylum system. By devolving power away from central government, it is also possible to place responsibility in the hands of those designing and delivering frontline services at the local level. Integration, we argue, is the key to fixing the current “broken” refugee and asylum system.

### 1.2.1. Why Now?

The asylum system – and immigration more generally – has become a highly contentious and politically polarised issue. The cost-of-living crisis, economic concerns, fears of job competition, and the strain on public services have fuelled anti-immigrant and anti-asylum sentiment. Research from the Woolf Institute (2020) has shown that there is a national consensus that diversity is good for British society, but also an emerging consensus that diversification has happened too quickly.<sup>14</sup> In July 2023 Parliament passed the UK government’s Illegal Migration Act, which means that people seeking asylum through “irregular means”, such as arriving via small boats, will no longer be able to claim asylum in the UK. This has deepened the “hostile environment” narrative already present.<sup>15</sup>

Parliament was debating the legislation as this Commission was undertaking its work, and the specifics of how the Government proposes to implement the Act were still not clear as the Commission concluded. Similarly, debate continued on the Government’s proposals to send to Rwanda asylum seekers who it no longer deems eligible for refugee protection (under the Illegal Migration Act). Following the Supreme Court’s unanimous ruling in November 2023 that the Rwanda policy was unlawful, the Government sought to address the Court’s judgement that Rwanda was not a safe country to send people to for asylum processing, by crafting a new treaty with Rwanda and putting further “Safety of Rwanda” legislation through Parliament. This was also still in play as the Commission concluded its work. So too, was the Government’s strategy to meet its target to clear by the end of 2023 the backlog of asylum claims pre-dating the Illegal Immigration Act. While the Commission’s focus is on the integration of people seeking refugee protection once in the UK,

how these legal and policy processes conclude will have profound implications for refugee integration strategies. As these debates endure, the reality is that people will continue to seek refugee protection in the UK; and so too will the need to provide effective, humane integration strategies.

**Increased waiting times on asylum decisions have also had a dramatic negative effect on integration outcomes. As of January 2024, the number of asylum applications waiting more than 18 months for an initial decision had increased to over 94,000.**

Current restrictive policies – such as removing the right to work for asylum seekers and limiting employment to the Shortage Occupation List<sup>16</sup> – have been designed to counter the potential “pull factor” for new arrivals. These policies have been maintained despite a 2020 Home Office report concluding that there is no evidence to substantiate

the existence of such a pull factor.<sup>17</sup> In addition, policies such as those limiting access to education and employment for asylum seekers have the effect of placing a greater strain on public funds by inhibiting new arrivals from becoming self-sufficient.<sup>18</sup>

Recent data suggest, however, that people seeking asylum make up only a small proportion of new arrivals to the UK, and that 75% of initial asylum decisions made in the year to September 2023 have been grants of protection.<sup>19</sup> At the end of December 2023, the number of asylum applications waiting more than 18 months for an initial decision had increased to 95,252.<sup>20</sup> Current government spending on hotel accommodation for asylum seekers stands at £8m a day,<sup>21</sup> while the most recent figures on the combined profits of private contractors Clearsprings and Stay Belvedere Hotels exceed £113m.<sup>22</sup> These data suggest that current policy (in terms of deterrence) is both expensive and ineffective, and that implementing a policy focused on the economic and social integration of new arrivals has the potential to rapidly reduce government spending at the same time as contributing to a more cohesive and resilient society.

Increased waiting times on asylum decisions have also had a dramatic negative effect on integration outcomes. This means that many individuals are left with no means to seek employment or to maintain their current level of skills and training for extended periods of time, which decreases their earning potential once they are able to enter the labour market. According to the economic analysis provided to the Commission by the LSE, waiting for the right to work for one extra year results in a 4% to 5% reduction in their chance of finding employment, which is equivalent to a 16% to 23% reduced chance of employment compared to the average.<sup>23</sup> The current government has already committed to clearing the “legacy backlog” and employing more asylum caseworkers.<sup>24</sup> However, the emphasis on clearing the backlog means that current policies fall short of providing adequate support

### 1.2.2. Delivering Integration Policy

A key issue with delivering policies around integration is the lack of clarity as to where responsibility lies between local and central government. Current policy on refugees and asylum seekers is determined centrally by government in Whitehall, with local authorities often having little influence on decisions around dispersal, accommodation, and access to frontline services, despite being most directly affected by these issues. In contrast to this, administrations in Scotland and Wales (and to a lesser extent Northern Ireland), do have devolved powers in key integration issues, including healthcare, accommodation, frontline services, and community relations. However, devolved administrations are currently not able to contribute to key policy areas, such as the assessment of asylum claims for individuals residing within their

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for integration. For example, changes introduced in August 2023 effectively decreased the move on period for those granted refugee status from 28 to seven days and resulted in a 140% increase in destitution and homelessness.<sup>25</sup> These changes have since been reversed.<sup>26</sup>

A comprehensive approach to integration has the potential to soften much of the polarised political debate as it represents a positive and solution-oriented approach that emphasises the common benefits of successful integration for both individuals and society as a whole.<sup>27</sup>

authority, and issues around the move-on period for newly granted refugees or individuals having no recourse to public funds (NRPF). This means that devolved and local governments are simultaneously more, and less, responsible for new arrivals – more, because responsibility for the day-to-day provision of services for new arrivals falls to them; and less, because they currently do not have the power to determine key policy areas that affect these frontline services, and thereby their ability to deliver on their local responsibilities. This tension was highlighted both by local government actors and by other stakeholders across the Commission’s evidence streams. An overhaul of the UK’s refugee and asylum system requires consideration of ways to empower devolved administrations and local authorities to offer bespoke, context-specific solutions for new arrivals in their constituencies, while ensuring that central government retains the power to determine national refugee and asylum policy.





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Finally, it is worth highlighting that civil society, especially faith communities, plays a vital role in areas such as supporting asylum applications; advocating for vulnerable individuals; securing accommodation and other essentials; and procuring community support that may not be sanctioned, funded, or delivered by the national government.<sup>28</sup> The Commission heard from stakeholders across numerous evidence streams (most notably in the Local Engagement Hearings and Call for Evidence) regarding the crucial and important role played by civil society in “plugging the gap” in frontline services. Although there was widespread praise and support for these organisations and the services they offer, the Commission also heard that

they lack resources, staff, and funding, and that provision for charitable organisations varies widely across different areas of the UK.

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### Note on Integration

Integration can be defined as: “communities where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.”<sup>29</sup> This means that refugees and asylum seekers should be supported to become engaged and active members of British society, at all levels. Importantly, integration is more than simply social mixing, it is also about access to opportunities and support. It means everyone makes adjustments – both those arriving here as refugees and those welcoming them to their communities.

The Commission draws on the Home Office’s Indicators of Integration (2019), which states that there are four main facets to successful integration: it is a process that is **multidimensional**, **multidirectional**, **a shared responsibility**, and **context-specific**.<sup>30</sup>

1. **Integration is multidimensional:** Integration encompasses access to resources, such as education and healthcare; opportunities for work and leisure; as well as broader concepts like social mixing. For example, language acquisition and education both have a direct impact on the ability to secure employment and to contribute

economically to society. Policies aimed at the successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers therefore need to consider a range of indicators, many of which are interrelated and interdependent.

2. **Integration is multidirectional:** Distinct from assimilation, where the responsibility for adaptation is placed solely upon the newcomer, integration acknowledges the participation of a range of individuals and institutions – from neighbours, to employers, to service providers, to government.
3. **Integration is a shared responsibility:** Integration depends upon everyone taking responsibility for their own contribution, including new arrivals, receiving communities, civil society, and government at all levels.
4. **Integration is context-specific:** Integration needs to be understood and planned in relation to its specific context and within a particular timeframe.



### 1.3. The Commission

The Commission on the Integration of Refugees was convened in 2022 by the Woolf Institute with the aim of improving the integration of refugees in the UK. Commissioners include refugees and former asylum seekers, security officials, lawyers, third-sector workers, clinicians, education and health experts, academics, faith and community leaders, politicians and policy makers from across the political spectrum. They worked together to overcome differences, build consensus, and to find common ground, driven by the evidence.

#### 1.3.1. Building Consensus

Despite the diversity of the Commission, all Commissioners agreed at the start on a series of fundamental principles. They also agreed that the current system – designed in the different political and financial climate of the late 1990s – is not working today, even if their initial ideas on how to fix it differed. The Commission wanted to see the UK playing its fair part helping people seeking protection from war, climate change, and persecution. We agreed on the importance of maintaining humane control of borders, and securing public legitimacy for refugee

**Evidence shows that policies designed to tap into refugee talent, promote social inclusion, and facilitate opportunities for employment, language learning, and skill acquisition have the potential to reduce the economic and social burden of the current asylum system.**

The Commission received evidence from more than 1,250 organisations and individuals regarding what would be required to improve the integration experiences of refugees and asylum seekers and to identify practical solutions with which to fix the broken system. The organisations and individuals included refugees and asylum seekers; policymakers and politicians; local government and civil servants; third sector workers; academics; faith and community leaders; and many other stakeholders. As an independent and broad-based body, the Commission offers a unique example of consensus building across political differences in a polarised and heated public debate. The Commission's recommendations are built on robust and wide-ranging evidence, with the voices of those with lived experience at its heart, and have achieved consensus across the political spectrum.<sup>31</sup> This makes our report the first of its kind, both in terms of the variety and depth of the evidence generated, but also in the ability to achieve broad-based findings on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

policy. We agreed that any refugee and asylum policy must respect the human rights of asylum seekers themselves, whether or not they were successful in a claim. And we agreed, that those who do qualify as refugees should be welcomed and integrated into our society.

There have until now been few opportunities for people like us – with ostensibly incompatible views – to come together, listen to each other's perspectives and experiences, and try to articulate a shared agenda. That is why Commissioners took the decision to join forces and work together on the Commission on the Integration of Refugees. All Commissioners signed up to the Commission in the full knowledge that we disagree with several of our fellow Commissioners. But we are all committed to envisioning a refugee and asylum system that works for a society where everybody – including refugees and asylum seekers – feels welcome and part of strong, cohesive communities. Only through building consensus across experiential and political divides will we be able to find practical solutions to create a better system; better for refugees and better for communities.

### 1.3.2. Principles

The Commission is committed to the principle that the refugee and asylum system must have the confidence and consent of the British public, which means acknowledging and addressing (mis)perceptions that refugees and asylum seekers are receiving preferential treatment. This report sets out the Commission's vision for an asylum system focused on the mutual benefits of integration, and provides a series of recommendations aimed at making the system more effective, humanitarian, and economically sustainable.

The Commission agreed at the outset that a fundamentally rethought UK refugee and asylum system should:

#### 1. Achieve public consent

Securing the confidence and consent of the British people. This requires “democratic deliberation” with input from refugees, local communities, and wider society. It needs flexibility and compromise between different stakeholders.

#### 2. Be accessible, transparent and properly funded

A reformed asylum process needs to be accessible and incorporate a transparent, fair, affordable, and properly funded asylum process that makes clear who has responsibility for the decision-making process and the criteria for how decisions are taken. It should provide training for decision makers and the border protection force to identify safe and humane policy, including the removal of failed asylum seekers.

#### 3. Be based on human rights

A human rights-based approach should prioritise social justice, human dignity, and the provision of protection, recognising “the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries” (Article 14 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and applied without discrimination as to ethnicity, religion and nationality, sex, age, disability, gender, sexuality, or other prohibited grounds.

#### 4. Be “outcome based” with clear objectives

The system should lead either to swift but dignified removal or approval (with a focus on waiting times and asylum determination success rate), while ensuring that applicants are afforded the necessary time and support to prepare their claims. This will require investment in training. The safety and dignity of refugees must lie at the heart of the return process.

#### 5. Empower local communities and enhance social contact with refugees

Communities need to be prepared for the arrival of refugees. Social contact between refugees and host communities should be encouraged such as through the provision of Welcome Hubs. Fostering personal encounters will facilitate the affirmation of shared values, the building of trust between diverse groups and the acceptance and integration of refugees.

#### 6. Enable safe and legal entry

The UK needs to enable safe and legal entry, such as through resettlement schemes, sponsorship programmes and international cooperation with the UK's neighbours. The system must also recognise that some refugees will not have access to safe and legal routes. The legal basis for selection must be fair and transparent, based on refugees' needs for protection and on a robust legal framework rather than on the method of entry.

#### 7. Establish clear criteria for measuring success

There must be clear criteria for measuring success and failure in the short, medium, and long term. This should include both qualitative and quantitative measurements that account for the employment, healthcare and economic trajectories of refugees, as well as, the direct and indirect cost and benefits of the asylum system for British society.

#### 8. Identify capacity limits

This is necessary to ensure that a suitable number of refugees is accepted in a given period for local community integration, and will enable multi-annual and predictable funding at local and national levels. This will also support civil society, and facilitate communication across different agencies and sectors.



**9. Learn from what works well**

There is much good practice from which to learn. This includes taking into consideration what works well in the existing (and previous) asylum system and in other countries in Europe and beyond, and apply lessons from the experiences of other sectors (such as NHS streamlining regulation during the Covid pandemic).

**10. Recognise the international context**

The UK asylum system exists in the context of global forced migration, such as war, climate change, persecution, and other factors. It is therefore important to look beyond the UK's borders. Numbers of refugees are likely to grow from the present 100 million displaced people, which means any asylum system is part of an international response to the displacement of people. This requires international cooperation, such as a commitment to accepting a fair proportion of refugees, as well as safe routes and measures that enable people to be safe without leaving their homes.

**11. Take into account the lived experience of refugees**

Refugees should be empowered to "co-produce" an asylum system that respects and responds to asylum seekers' needs. Those with refugee experience should become assets to future refugees and UK society, such as by serving as advocates. At the same time, prepare refugees to adapt to the lifestyle of the host community without losing their own cultural identity.

**12. Prevent abuse of the system**

A fit-for-purpose refugee and asylum system would distinguish between those who are genuinely in need of protection and those who are not. It would also mitigate against criminal enterprises seeking to exploit those attempting to access the system. This will ensure public trust in the system as well as help to tackle some of the criminal activity and human exploitation associated with current irregular migration, such as indentured labour and modern slavery.

# Recommendations with Supporting Evidence

## A “New Settlement” for Refugees

### Principle

The UK should have an integrated, holistic, and functioning refugee and asylum system, which offers a systematic and devolved approach to refugee integration that overhauls the current piecemeal and inconsistent arrangements.

### 1. Recommendation

**Devolve asylum and refugee resettlement support systems in a “New Settlement for Refugees”. This calls for a whole system approach to put local integration partnerships in the driving seat of refugee integration.**

**The “New Settlement for Refugees” should consist of four strands that represent an evidence-driven, coordinated, and systematic approach to integration across all levels:**

- v) Carrying out a radical devolution of the asylum and refugee resettlement systems to local level underpinned by strong local integration partnerships, Combined Authorities and devolved nations wherein all resources for asylum and resettlement are controlled and invested locally.
- vi) Putting in place a new statement of goals for national refugee integration policy by the UK government and UK devolved nations’ governments.
- vii) Revising and upgrading Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) as the key vehicles overseeing this strategy on the ground.
- viii) Putting in place strong governance and improved channels for democratic accountability and oversight with people with first-hand experience as refugees at its heart.

### 1.1. Rationale

The current approach to integration of refugees and asylum seekers is fragmented and often uncoordinated. It offers varying levels of support and resources to different groups, generating inequalities. Decisions to implement costly short-term fixes – such as housing in hotels – are taken without the involvement of local government and communities. Control is taken away from local people, generating chaos and confusion and sometimes exacerbating grievance against refugees and asylum seekers.

The Commission has heard a significant amount of evidence regarding the pivotal role of local authorities (LAs) and charities in acting as leaders within their regions. In many localities, LAs and civil society work together in convening local partners to deliver services and to coordinate efforts with the voluntary sector and frontline services, often without the support of central government.

**Create new partnerships with civil society and lived experience experts, encouraging investment of funds locally.**





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**Although asylum decisions remain the domain of Whitehall, many of the services essential to supporting refugees and asylum seekers to settle into communities are devolved and are the responsibility of the devolved governments and local authorities.**

The UK Government should put local integration partnerships (defined as a collaboration between (local authorities, civil society and local people), Combined Authorities, and devolved administrations in the driving seat of a new approach to refugee integration that ensures community-level management of all available resources. This will empower local authorities, their partners, and local people to meet the needs of their refugee, asylum-seeking, and long-standing communities. It should do this by investing the funds currently committed to asylum accommodation and refugee integration into local communities. Processes will be overseen by Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) with upgraded scale, investment, and ambition, as well as new mechanisms for accountability.

## **1.2. Practicalities**

This “New Settlement for Refugees” will have four strands:

- 1. A radical devolution of the refugee and asylum resettlement systems to local level** underpinned by strong local integration partnerships, Combined Authorities, and devolved nations, wherein all resources for asylum and resettlement are controlled and invested locally.
  - a. Utilising Combined Authorities, devolved nations, and newly developed local integration partnerships to identify accommodation and practical solutions. These will be funded through the reallocation of current funds. This would shift the balance away from the current top-down approach dominated by central government and private sector providers. It would enable a move towards local communities thereby ensuring local control and the ability to plan in the short- and long-terms.

*Above: Commissioners Jacqueline Broadhead and Hanna Kienzler at the Birmingham Hearing.*

- b. Create new partnerships with civil society and lived experience experts, encouraging investment of funds locally. This would create services that are open not only to all asylum seekers and refugees, but also to local people.
- c. Shift away from schemes for different groups, to a place-based approach allowing for economies of scale and the fostering of social cohesion. This would promote equitable access to services and contact between groups.

## **2. Putting in place a new statement of goals for national refugee integration policy by the UK government and UK devolved nations' governments.**

This would build on the Home Office's current Indicators of Integration.<sup>32</sup> The statement would set the framework for long-term planning, resource allocation and local implementation.

- a. This should be accompanied by a rigorous whole-system review of public spending on refugees and asylum. This would provide a transparent overview of current expenditure and on how and where to realign this behind the new national goals.
- b. The re-allocation of existing public spending to local integration partnerships to invest in resources and services. This would ensure the achievement of national goals.
- c. The delivery of national strategy goals should be reported on annually. Delivery should be overseen by a dedicated lead unit working across government departments to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation.
- d. The numbers of refugees and asylum seekers to be resettled, as well as their levels of need, will be decided at the national level.

## **3. Revising and upgrading Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) as the key vehicles overseeing this strategy on the ground.**

- a. The SMPs would work with local integration partnerships, Combined Authorities and devolved nations to provide regional oversight. They would support the identification and allocation of accommodation and integration services for refugees and asylum seekers.
- b. SMPs will have a formal role in promoting integration and the development of integration infrastructure at the local level.
- c. Funding would be allocated to, and agreed by, local integration partnerships, Combined Authorities and devolved nations through a multi-year settlement. It will be based on projected numbers and levels of need as set out in the national goals strategy. It would have the capacity for flexibility as needed to address local needs and changing circumstances.
- d. The SMPs would be empowered to negotiate with central government on numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers they would resettle in their regions. They would have powers to contract with local integration partnerships, Combined Authorities and devolved nations. They would be provided with full-cost funding reallocated from current high-cost, centralised expenditure and with savings going to local services.

**Panellists at the Glasgow and Newcastle Local Hearings testified as to the differential treatment of different cohorts of asylum seekers and refugees and the lack of an integrated approach to refugee integration in the UK.**



## **The UK government does not currently have an integration strategy for refugees and asylum seekers, although devolved administrations in both Scotland and Wales do have such strategies.**

### **4. Ensuring that the “New Settlement” works by putting in place strong governance and improved channels for democratic accountability and oversight with people with first-hand experience as refugees at its heart.**

This should include:

- a. Restoring the role of a UK Refugee Minister working across key UK national departments and based in the Cabinet Office.
- b. Creating an Independent Reviewer of Refugee Affairs responsible for reviewing and auditing the system against its agreed goals on a similar basis to the Intelligence Services Committee. The Reviewer would be free to obtain advice wherever they saw fit. This would include from a National Refugee Integration Forum of lived experience and other experts and practitioners.
- c. The Independent Reviewer would be accountable to, and produce, an annual report for Parliament.
- d. The creation of a strong all-party Parliamentary committee to provide oversight of the asylum and refugee system. This would include a review of, and learning from, the work of the Independent Reviewer.
- e. Building on the learning of devolved governments and granting a new integration remit to SMPs.

### **1.3. Key Supporting Evidence**

1. The Commission has heard evidence from numerous stakeholders, policymakers, local government officials, third sector workers, and refugees and asylum seekers themselves pointing to the complex, piecemeal, and siloed policy areas around refugees and asylum seekers. This creates confusion and discrepancies in the system, with negative repercussions for the integration of different cohorts. Respondents have also highlighted the negative impact of problems

within the current system, such as the significant backlog of asylum applications and long waiting times for asylum decisions (see below). Since many of the rights and opportunities available to refugees in the UK do not extend to those awaiting asylum decisions, this bureaucratic delay can have a significant impact on an individual’s ability to access certain frontline services, which is another barrier to successful integration.

2. While it has agreed indicators for integration<sup>33</sup> the UK government does not currently have an integration strategy for refugees and asylum seekers, although devolved administrations in both Scotland and Wales do have such strategies, the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (2018-2022)<sup>34</sup> and Wales Nation of Sanctuary Plan (2019)<sup>35</sup> respectively. The Executive Office of Northern Ireland (previously the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) has also prepared a refugee strategy (2022-2027), though this has yet to be ratified.
3. Although asylum decisions remain the domain of Whitehall, many of the services essential to supporting refugees and asylum seekers to settle into communities are devolved and are the responsibility of the devolved governments and local authorities. This includes health, education, legal services (including legal aid) and housing (excluding asylum accommodation). However, there can be restrictions placed on accessing some of these services where a person has no recourse to public funds. Under the ‘dispersal’ system implemented by the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, destitute asylum seekers are housed in different parts of the UK on a no-choice basis while their claims for protection are being assessed. This means that asylum seekers often face significantly different circumstances on arrival, depending on their dispersal location (see Key Supporting Evidence for recommendation 6).

4. Civil society – especially faith communities – plays an active role in the integration of asylum seekers, such as supporting asylum applications, advocating for vulnerable individuals, and procuring community support. Evidence gathered by the Commission shows that refugees and asylum seekers’ integration and well-being do rely heavily on civil society and charitable interventions that may not be sanctioned, funded, or delivered by national governments.
5. The differential access to rights, services, and provisions offered to asylum seekers and refugees in the UK has effectively resulted in what multiple respondents referred to as a “two-tier system”. For example, panellists at the Glasgow and Newcastle Local Hearings testified as to the differential treatment of different cohorts of asylum seekers and refugees and the lack of an integrated approach to refugee integration in the UK.
6. SMPs are led by local-authorities and provide a forum which engages with key stakeholders from the private, public, and third sectors across regions and local authorities to deal with local and regional migration. They are core funded by the Home Office but often receive additional funds to undertake a range of tasks. Historically, their main responsibility has been to oversee and monitor asylum contracts in their region. For several years they acted as a mediator between the Home Office and local authorities in identifying accommodation places and organising financial contracts. In recent years with the rise in the use of the private sector housing and contracts they have acted as an information conduit between stakeholders and the Home Office while overseeing some elements of resettlement in their regions. To resume their former role in overseeing regional accommodation they will need further investment in staff and expertise.
7. Data from the Neighbourly Lab survey point to the first six months post-arrival as a crucial window for individuals to access frontline services, build social networks, and increase long-term integration outcomes. Evidence overwhelmingly suggests that it is difficult to integrate while still within the asylum system.<sup>36</sup>
8. Panellists in Glasgow and Cardiff pointed to the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (2018-2022)<sup>33</sup> and Wales Nation of Sanctuary Plan (2019)<sup>34</sup> as examples of good practice regarding a statutory commitment to “integration from day one” for both refugees and asylum seekers.
9. Evidence submitted to the Commission suggests that a UK-wide integrated strategy addressing the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, drawing on elements of best practice in the devolved nations, could have greater long-term positive impact than the current piecemeal and devolved approach.

**Although asylum decisions remain the domain of Whitehall, many of the services essential to supporting refugees and asylum seekers to settle into communities are devolved and are the responsibility of the devolved governments and local authorities.**

*Below: Commissioners Hanna Kienzler and Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani gardening with members of Maryhill Integration Network.*



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# Accommodation, Dispersal, and Detention

## Principles

The availability, quality, location, and security of accommodation has been shown to have a direct effect on people’s ability to integrate. The current piecemeal approach to accommodation is expensive, inefficient, and detrimental to integration outcomes. The movement of people from place to place and the reliance on temporary accommodation negatively impacts upon people’s ability to integrate. Immigration detention should only be used as a last resort.

“ Housing has also been difficult. We are still in temporary accommodation and were housed in an area where we could see a lot of people drinking alcohol, taking drugs and going to the toilet around the building. The lock on the door to the main building was always broken so anybody could get in. It didn’t feel safe or clean for me and my son. Thanks to our local MSP we’ve been moved but it’s still temporary and it’s hard to settle properly knowing we will need to move again. ”

*A refugee woman living in Scotland who took part in the Glasgow Hearing*

## 2. Recommendation

**Develop a comprehensive Resettlement Scheme drawing on best practice and experience from recent and current programmes, including the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine, the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).**

### 2.1. Rationale

Resettlement Schemes give local integration partnerships, including local authorities, civil society, and local people, the opportunity to be proactive in the development of integration capacity and can become the focal point for wider social inclusion efforts.

- › Local authority driven resettlement programmes such as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) allow local partnerships to design initiatives which shape integration opportunities tailored to local contexts.
- › Sponsorship schemes offer local people the ability to encounter refugees as humans, thereby fostering interpersonal connections. They can be a successful pathway to integration for everyone.
- › Sponsorship, homestay and family reunion schemes can increase the provision of safe and legal routes.

### 2.2. Practicalities

The Comprehensive Resettlement Scheme should:

- a. Be coordinated nationally, administered by local integration partnerships, and delivered through shared endeavour and responsibility with civil society including diaspora groups, local charities, and faith-based organisations.
- b. Be based on a multi-year funding settlement with local communities allowing for long-term planning and allocation of resources.
- c. Be informed by learnings from good practice in international schemes, including those using sponsorship, homestay, and family reunification models.
- d. Adapt existing infrastructure (learning from the Ukraine experience) to ensure speedy, effective, and trauma-informed scrutiny of applicants and of accommodation settings that takes national security concerns into account and facilitates positive integration outcomes.
- e. Provide casework support to facilitate integration.
- f. Be flexible and adaptable to local needs/conditions and to humanitarian crises with appropriate upstream involvement of devolved administrations.
- g. Take family unity/reunification strongly into account.



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- h. Provide pre-arrival and ongoing support for local communities (e.g. increasing cultural and religious literacy).
  - i. Be evaluated systematically in terms of specified integration outcomes (e.g. sense of safety, security and belonging; local community awareness, attitudes and support; and success, where appropriate, in securing employment).
  - j. Be accompanied by a new approach to asylum policy, including the development of safe and legal routes to resettlement.
3. The VPRS has transformed the role of Local Authorities in refugee resettlement and integration. Whereas their role had previously been limited to asylum dispersal (characterised by a lack of resourcing and antagonism between Councils, the Home Office, and private sector accommodation providers), Resettlement Schemes gave Local Authorities the opportunity to develop more proactive integration capacity. While some Councils sought to outsource support for resettled refugees, others took the opportunity to develop in-house Resettlement Teams (including helping new arrivals to settle and become independent). In Bristol and Coventry, these Resettlement Teams have become the focal point for wider migrant inclusion efforts, and have given rise to more strategic local responses.

### 2.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. Overall, the evidence received by the Commission underscores the need for a more cohesive and consistent approach to refugee integration, addressing these disparities, and creating a fair and equitable system for all. The Homes for Ukraine scheme represents a model of good practice that could be expanded and streamlined for other refugee cohorts.
2. In 2015, the UK government introduced the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), and in 2016 the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), under which the UNHCR assessed vulnerability of potential refugees. These resettlement schemes marked an increase in ambition for refugee resettlement in the UK and signalled the UK government's policy to prioritise offering of protection to refugees remaining in the region rather than working with European partners to redistribute refugees who had reached Europe by irregular routes.<sup>37</sup>
4. In preparation for the ending of the VPRS scheme, it was announced in June 2019 that the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) would replace VPRS, VCRS, and Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) schemes, the purpose of which was to continue to resettle 5,000 refugees over the course of 2020-2021 with an entitlement to work and access public funds. Delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the final refugees under VPRS arrived in February 2021 and by June 2022 only 1,685 people had been resettled under UKRS.

*Above: Sarah Jones MP talking with other panellists at the London Hearing.*

5. The Commission has heard evidence regarding the limited scope of the UKRS<sup>38</sup> scheme, especially given the likely increase globally in population movement in the near future.<sup>39</sup>
6. A July 2023 report by the Refugee Council highlighted that “in the year to March 2023, refugee resettlement schemes operating in partnership with UNHCR were down 40% on the previous year, while the scheme that allows refugees in the UK to be joined by their close relatives was 23% lower. The low numbers are not because there is no need for resettlement or a demand for family reunion but are a result of a lack of places<sup>40</sup> and lengthy delays in processing.”<sup>41</sup> In the same report, the Refugee Council commented on the “limited scale and scope” of current immigration routes, and drew attention to the fact that “there is no visa that allows people to travel to the UK for the purpose of applying for asylum”.
8. Evidence collected by the Commission suggests that the community sponsorship model can offer a successful pathway to integration if the proper resources, information, and capabilities are provided to the sponsoring organisation or community. When successful, community sponsorship, and the Ukraine Family Scheme (more in section 3), “has the ability to meet people as humans and to foster human connections” (Glasgow Local Engagement Hearing).
9. Community and family sponsorship offers an alternative route for refugees and asylum seekers to enter the UK, and provides one of the most direct ways that local communities can provide support to vulnerable people fleeing conflict. Other countries offering similar schemes include Canada (where two-thirds of refugees come through private sponsorship) and the US (where faith-based communities have taken the lead).

**The Commission has heard evidence from across all evidence streams pointing to the confusion created by these disparities in the system, with different rights and services provided to individuals entering the country on different schemes.**

7. In addition to the UKRS scheme, separate resettlement schemes exist for refugees from specific countries, all of which were initiated in response to geopolitical developments. Following the model of the VPRS and VCRS, the UK currently has schemes for refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Hong Kong (under the British Nationals Overseas scheme). The Commission has heard evidence from across all evidence streams pointing to the confusion created by these disparities in the system, with different rights and services provided to individuals entering the country on different schemes.

Evidence from Canada, the US, as well as evidence gathered by the Commission in the UK suggests that community and family sponsorship can be successful by bringing a “shared responsibility” element to refugee integration, but that in order to be successful such models require “a lot of willingness from civil society and a political will to enable refugee integration”.<sup>42</sup>
10. The Homes for Ukraine protection scheme is widely seen as a success story in refugee homestay schemes, welcoming 131,000 refugees between March 2022 and August 2023 through sponsorship by 73,759 UK residents.<sup>43</sup> The success of this scheme demonstrated public willingness to sponsor refugees, such as 248,000 who expressed interest in offering their home, although the extent to which this success could be replicated with refugee cohorts from different communities is open to question. In a review of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, Commissioners were informed of the positive impact of such schemes on public opinion, giving grounds for optimism.

11. A 2023 report entitled ‘The Future is Safe and Legal’ by the Head of Policy Exchange’s Demography, Immigration, and Integration Unit, David Goodhart, notes that: “The Homes for Ukraine scheme has shown that willing citizens can play a bigger role in the refugee/asylum system than the state has hitherto believed possible.”<sup>44</sup>
12. A key advantage of the Homes for Ukraine protection scheme is that, since refugees are placed in the homes of people resident in the UK, they are, by nature, very likely to be socially included into communities, with a host family which guides them to navigate services and which becomes a source of informal social and language support. The scheme’s biggest innovation is the fact that it does not impact on the housing market, so

opens new capacity for refugees. Although there is no research quantitatively analysing the success of the scheme in terms of its ability to build social connections, this scheme is built on the two-way nature of integration; the literature suggests that when communities actively receive new arrivals, integration is facilitated.<sup>45</sup>

**The Homes for Ukraine scheme has shown that willing citizens can play a bigger role in the refugee/asylum system than the state has hitherto believed possible.**

*Below: Support being given at Brushstrokes Community Project.*



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**Lived experience voices also testified to the Commission regarding their treatment by staff and management at hotels, with one Moroccan man describing being threatened by Clearsprings hotel managers: “it’s like we’re prisoners and they’re prison guards, just thinking about it now still gives me nightmares” (Cardiff Local Engagement Hearing participant)**

### 3. Recommendation

**Deliver housing through local integration partnerships, led by local authorities, to ensure that central government and independent sector resources are invested in the expansion of accommodation in communities, some of which would be reserved for refugees and asylum seekers. This would be beneficial to the whole population in need of housing, as well as to refugees and asylum seekers.**

#### 3.1. Rationale

- › To end the current reliance on unsatisfactory and expensive provision in hotels (and on other “contingent” accommodation such as barracks and barges) which are made available on a “for profit” basis and are extremely expensive and often unsuitable for long-term residence.<sup>46</sup> Together with progress towards more efficient and fairer asylum decisions, the proposed partnership schemes would provide cost-saving and sustainable alternatives to the use of hotels.
- › Short-term and unsuitable private sector accommodation undermines integration and jeopardises the mental and physical health of those who reside in it.<sup>47</sup>
- › A switch to local partnership provision, encouraging expansion of existing accommodation stock, would benefit others with urgent housing needs, as well as refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>48</sup>

*Below: Panellists at the Glasgow Hearing.*



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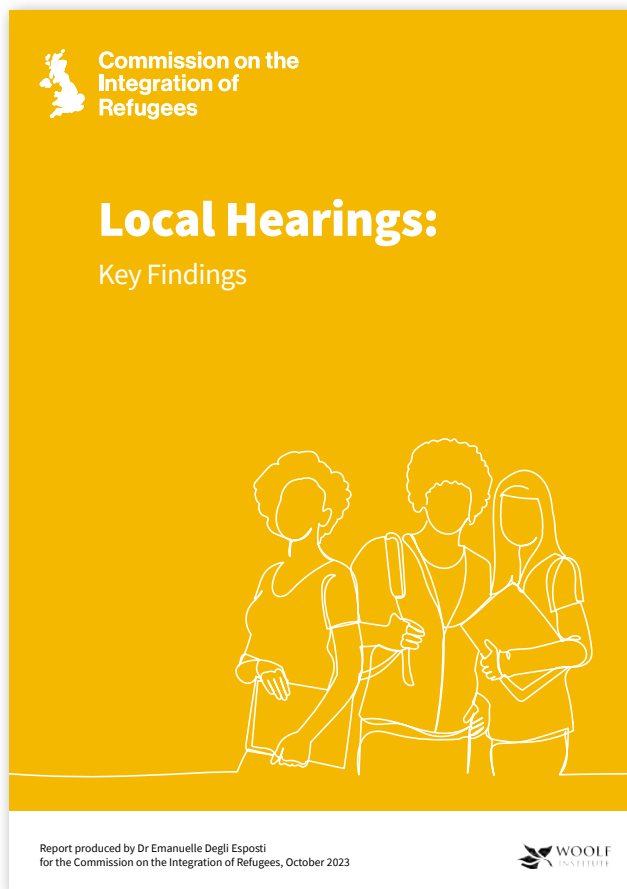
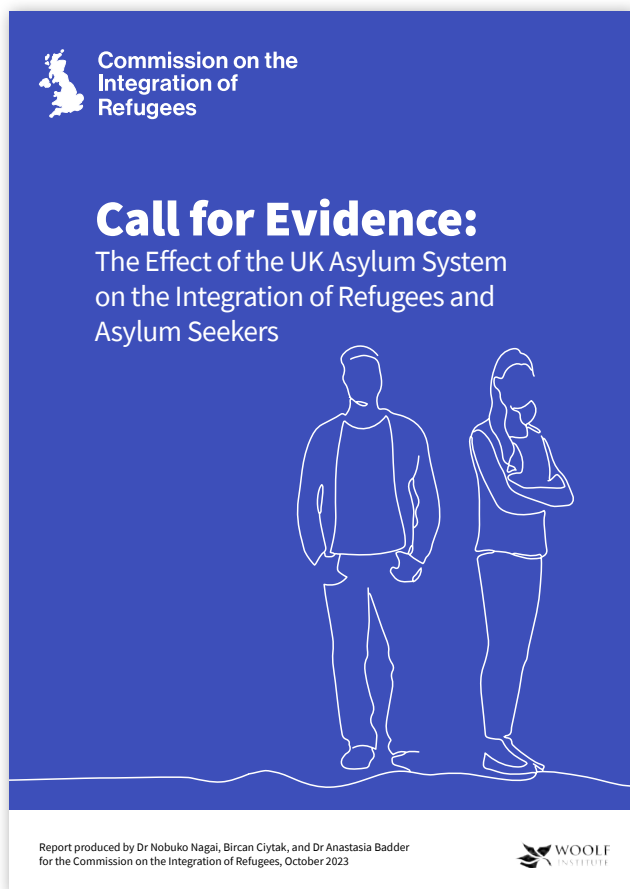
### 3.2. Practicalities

- a. Local integration partnerships, including local people, should have a say in how and where people are housed within their area.
- b. Local authorities have a statutory Main Housing duty to meet local needs and must be allocated sufficient funding to enable them to fulfil this duty, as well as accommodating new refugees.<sup>49</sup>
- c. Coordination throughout the different levels of government and within the voluntary sector is essential to enable effective integration processes.
- d. Include investment in the repurposing of currently void housing stock. This increase in usable housing stock has the potential to benefit the wider UK population, not just refugees and asylum seekers.
- e. Include a “hosting” component to increase use of existing and excess accommodation – with lessons learned from the Community Sponsorship (Syria) and Homes for Ukraine schemes (particularly in terms of addressing safeguarding needs, supporting hosts, and minimising risk of homelessness if hosting breaks down). Such hosting could reduce pressure on local housing stock while also providing alternatives to existing asylum accommodation.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. Accommodation represents the biggest government cost within the current asylum system. The backlog of applications means that accommodation costs increase further because people are housed in temporary accommodation for longer whilst they wait for a decision. There are additional ongoing indirect costs since inappropriate accommodation hampers people’s long-term ability to integrate.<sup>51</sup>
2. Demand for asylum accommodation is currently greater than supply, which means that the Home Office has needed to use hotels (and other forms of accommodation) to increase capacity. Approximately 51,000 people seeking asylum were in hotel accommodation at the end of June 2023 and £2.3 billion was spent on hotels in 2022/23.<sup>52</sup> The accommodation is often “unsanitary”,<sup>53</sup> in cramped conditions, and costs the taxpayer between £5.6 and £7 million per day. Whilst waiting for a decision during the application process, people are eligible for accommodation from the Government. This means that the longer the wait in the application process, the higher the accommodation costs.<sup>54</sup>
3. Temporary accommodation in hotels was deemed by numerous participants at the local hearings and Call for Evidence as unsatisfactory and detrimental to long-term integration outcomes by adversely impacting mental health, social connections, education and employment opportunities, and social cohesion.<sup>55</sup> The lack of access to cooking and laundry facilities in temporary accommodation was also widely commented on across evidence streams, as well as the provision of unsuitable, unsafe, and culturally inappropriate food (for example, non-halal meat, or spoiled vegetables), sometimes leading to health problems or exacerbating existing ones.

## From Arrival to Integration is based on six pillars of research



Above left: 1. *Call for Evidence: The Effect of the UK Asylum System on the Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers*  
Above right: 2. *Local Hearings: Key Findings*

4. The Commission heard evidence regarding the negative outcomes of partnerships between the UK government and private contractors such as Serco, Mears, and Clearsprings, especially the lack of cooperation with local authorities (partly due to the fact the contract is made between the Home Office and the private contractor).
5. Contractors such as Clearsprings have also been criticised for the way they run and maintain temporary accommodations, with numerous respondents commenting on their unsuitability. Lived experience voices also testified to the Commission regarding their treatment by staff and management at hotels, with one Moroccan man describing being threatened by Clearsprings hotel managers: “it’s like we’re prisoners and they’re prison guards, just thinking about it now still gives me nightmares” (Cardiff Local Engagement Hearing participant).

**Temporary accommodation in hotels was deemed by numerous participants at the local hearings and Call for Evidence as unsatisfactory and detrimental to long-term integration outcomes by adversely impacting mental health, social connections, education and employment opportunities, and social cohesion.**

6. Clearsprings made headlines in June 2023 when it emerged that the contractor outbid a number of local authorities to secure a Home Office contract to find accommodation for asylum seekers.<sup>56</sup> In 2022, Clearsprings reported profits of almost £28m.<sup>57</sup> In a meeting convened by the LGA, the Commission heard about the potential for accommodation to be treated as mixed tenure, which would allow councils to have a block of accommodation that could be used for multiple refugee cohorts. Senior local government officers expressed frustration that Home Office funding was given to profit-making private contractors, rather than being allocated to local councils. Representatives also stressed the need for “a cross-system (and therefore cross-Whitehall) approach to accommodation”, as well as concerns around current housing and homelessness pressures that impact on integration.
7. Overall, the evidence the Commission heard was strongly in favour of support for bringing temporary accommodation services back under the control of Local Authorities rather than that of private contractors.
8. Accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers is also affected by the national housing shortage in the UK, and the Commission heard evidence from Local Authorities and civil society organisations regarding the struggle to find suitable housing for all affected individuals, whether UK nationals or refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees entering the private housing market often struggle to find suitable accommodation, or face discrimination or extra checks due to their status. Many respondents also commented on the detrimental effect of negative media coverage and public discourse around asylum and refugee accommodation, especially the public perception of hotels.
9. Panellists in the Glasgow and Cardiff local engagement hearings commented on devolved strategies that help to mitigate these concerns. In Scotland, legislation has been introduced that protects tenants by prohibiting landlords from charging more than 6-months’ rent upfront. Wales has a similar scheme called Rent Smart that helps protect private tenants from eviction and other forms of exploitation. Scotland’s New Scots Integration Strategy, which operates a principle of “integration from day one”, also allows asylum seekers to apply for social housing while in temporary accommodation, which was raised as an example of best practice by panellists in Glasgow.<sup>58</sup>
10. Adopting a devolved, locally-led approach to accommodation ties in with the Commission’s overarching recommendation to implement a “New Settlement for Refugees” that represents an evidence-driven, coordinated, and systematic approach to integration across all levels.

## 4. Recommendation

**Extend the transition period for asylum seekers to “move on” after being given leave to remain as refugees from 28 days to 56 days.**

### 4.1. Rationale

A shift to a 56-day move on period would:

- › Reduce the likelihood of homelessness and reduce the pressure on the local authorities and charities supporting homeless refugees.
- › Make it more likely that the transition following a grant of leave is a positive experience as refugees begin the next phase of their journey towards integration.

### 4.2. Practicalities

- a. Local authorities should be alerted by the Home Office as soon as a grant of leave is issued (rather than awaiting the issue of the Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)) so as to maximise the time available to arrange accommodation.
- b. Though the augmented move-on period would reduce the availability of asylum accommodation to new arrivals, this would be offset by increased efficiency in asylum decision making.
- c. In the longer term, the high costs of asylum accommodation will be mitigated by more efficient and fairer decision making.

**Data collected across the Call for Evidence also indicates that the 28-day move on period results in high rates of isolation, disconnection, and homelessness. Civil society actors at local hearings emphasised that this period does not allow sufficient time to access benefits or alternative housing and there is a recognised lack of robust support prior to leaving asylum accommodation.**

- › Be in line with other local authority transfer notice periods.
- › Facilitate the transition from a discrete welfare system administered by the Home Office to the mainstream Universal Credit system.
- › Decrease the mental distress that impedes and delays effective integration – thereby reducing economic and societal costs as well as safeguarding the integrity of the affected individual.
- › Address the disadvantages (both to refugees and to local authorities) of the existing system – a minimum of 28 days often reduced in practice to a minimum of seven days.<sup>59</sup> These include:
  - The major challenge to local authorities and supporting NGOs in identifying those who are particularly vulnerable and finding alternative accommodation for them at very short notice
  - Many refugees experiencing a period of poverty and reliance on crisis loans
  - High levels of homelessness

### 4.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. Data collected across the Call for Evidence also indicates that the 28-day move on period results in high rates of isolation, disconnection, and homelessness. Civil society actors at local hearings emphasised that this period does not allow sufficient time to access benefits or alternative housing and there is a recognised lack of robust support prior to leaving asylum accommodation. Respondents to the Call for Evidence survey further cited the lack of “Duty to Refer” in England which may result in asylum seekers slipping ‘through the cracks’ and experiencing homelessness following the move-on period.
2. Since 1 August 2023, the Home Office made changes to the move-on process. The 28 day move-on period would now begin when individuals receive their asylum decision letter, rather than (as previously) when they receive their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). Due to delays in BRPs being processed, this has meant that many refugees have been given as little as seven days’ notice to move on. This change was reversed in December 2023 as a result of an increase in the rate of homelessness among newly-recognised refugees.<sup>60</sup>

3. Numerous civil society and advocacy groups had previously campaigned for the 28-day period to be increased to 56 days to be in line with general homelessness regulations. The Commission heard evidence at local hearings and through the Call for Evidence regarding the challenges of the 28-day move-on period, and the fact it acts as a barrier to integration. This has been exacerbated in light of the recent changes.
4. In an open letter to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in September 2023, over 140 NGOs urged the government to “reverse the changes so that refugees have a minimum of 28 days before they’re required to leave their accommodation.”<sup>61</sup> The British Red Cross reported on 1 October 2023 that since the recent changes to the move-on process, their Refugee Service has seen a 140% increase in destitution for people they support with refugee status.<sup>62</sup>
5. Homelessness and destitution represent significant barriers to integration, as outlined by Care4Calais in written evidence submitted to the Commission: “Forcing people into homelessness subjects refugees to more trauma and uncertainty, which will impact their mental health. Vulnerable refugees, including young single men and women, and those with mental and physical illnesses, will be put into even more precarious situations, meaning they find it even harder to find their feet in the UK. Trying to find housing and employment in such a short period of time causes enormous emotional strain and stress for refugees, many of whom have already experienced significant trauma in their lives. Overall, this puts refugees at a huge disadvantage when trying to build their lives in the UK.”
6. Panellists at the Glasgow hearing testified to the better provision for homeless support in Scotland (and the New Scots Integration Strategy 2018-22<sup>63</sup> is funding an Ending Homelessness Together Fund to eradicate rough sleeping among refugees and asylum seekers), although this is under threat from the recent changes to Home Office policy.

*Below: Commissioners and panellists at the Birmingham Hearing.*



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## 5. Recommendation

**Only use detention as a last resort and as a precursor to rapid removal where genuine absconding and/or security risks cannot otherwise be managed. Case-management alternatives offer better value for money, have been demonstrated to work, and are more humane. Children should not be detained under any circumstances.**

### 5.1. Rationale

- › The UK has very high rates of immigration detention and is the only country in Europe without a statutory maximum duration of detention.<sup>64</sup>
- › Detention is expensive and ineffective (with very low post-detention removal rates).
- › It proved possible during the Covid-19 pandemic to substantially reduce detention rates.<sup>65</sup>
- › Detention is associated with high rates of mental health problems, as well as greater strain on health, police, and prison services further down the line – particularly when prolonged.<sup>66</sup>
- › UK pilots of case-management alternatives to detention, which involve supporting asylum-seekers to resolve their cases in the community, rather than in detention, have been found to offer better value for money, and to be superior to detention in terms of improvement in asylum seekers’ mental health and wellbeing and in their ability to understand their legal options.<sup>67</sup>

### 5.2. Practicalities

- a. Community accommodation should be the default provision with clear and evidenced justification for any decisions to detain.
- b. Decisions to continue detention should be subject to independent review.
- c. Priority should be given to the roll-out of alternatives to detention projects, such as case-management.

**“If I’m in prison, I have a sentence and I count down the number of days. When I’m in detention, I count the number of days I have been here” (Newcastle Local Engagement Hearing)**

### 5.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. The UK has one of the largest detention estates in comparison with European countries and, unlike EU countries, has no time limit on immigration detention.<sup>68</sup> The Home Office has the administrative power to detain a non-citizen at any point in their immigration process.
2. The most recent figures published by the Home Office show that 23,354 people entered immigration detention in 2023, and that at the end of June 2023, there were 1,924 people held in immigration detention (including those detained under immigration powers in prison).<sup>69</sup> 75% of people who left detention in 2023 were bailed off, mostly due to an asylum (or other) application being raised. This suggests that detention is still being used to process new arrivals rather than solely in preparation for return.<sup>70</sup>
3. A 2022 report by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford noted that 86% of people leaving immigration detention in 2021 were released on bail.<sup>71</sup> The same report found that: “In the financial year 2021-22, the Home Office issued a record number of compensation payments for unlawful detention, totalling around £13 million.”
4. The Commission has collected evidence from multiple sources regarding the harm caused by detention facilities. There are high rates of suicide and self-harm as well as limited training for staff in mental health management. Detention is especially unsuitable for people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), since they are placed in an environment conducive to trauma by being kept in the same place as people who have committed crimes. Moreover, the status and treatment of people whilst waiting for a decision on their application is harmful. For example, they may be electronically tagged, forcibly removed, continuously monitored, under curfew and live in dehumanising places such as former army barracks. In addition to the impacts on individuals’ mental health, unstable housing also makes it difficult to have consistency in their medical appointments.

5. The LSE Economic Analysis report also found that people held in detention “have limited access to the local community, interactions with other people, and fewer opportunities to engage with the community whilst they stay there.”<sup>72</sup>
9. In 2018, the Home Office began the Detention Reform Programme, which set out a strategic direction for use of immigration detention in the UK and a wide range of reforms to underpin that including developing Alternatives to Detention (ATD). In response, the UK government announced

**Accommodation of this type is especially unsuitable for people with post-traumatic stress, since they are placed in an environment conducive to trauma by being kept in the same place as people who have committed crimes.**

6. There is significant evidence that detention harms both mental and physical health, and impacts long-term integration outcomes. A 2009 cross-sectional study published in the *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* found that detained asylum seekers had higher scores for depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms than asylum seekers living within the community. The same study also found that there was an interaction between length of detention period and depression scores.<sup>73</sup>
7. Lived experience voices at the Newcastle Local Engagement Hearing testified as to the effects of detention: “If I’m in prison, I have a sentence and I count down the number of days. When I’m in detention, I count the number of days I have been here” (Newcastle Local Engagement Hearing).
8. Given the high cost of the detention infrastructure and the high release rate, numerous studies have pointed to the effectiveness of potential alternatives, including case-management pilots in the UK<sup>74</sup> and US.<sup>75</sup> A report published by Human Rights Watch reviewing case management programmes in the US, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Poland concluded that such programmes “have not only been successful in meeting government needs, but they also provide access to services that allow people to live in dignity while their asylum cases are pending.”<sup>76</sup>
10. An UNHCR independent evaluation of *Action Access* – the first pilot in the CEP series, delivered by Action Foundation over two years from 2019 to 2021 – concluded that: “participants experienced more stability and better health and wellbeing outcomes whilst being supported in the community than they had received while in detention. Evidence from this pilot suggests that these outcomes were achievable without decreasing compliance with the immigration system. More widespread use of ATD in partnership with NGOs to deliver timely legal reviews and case resolution has the potential to address any systemic issues in immigration such as the reliance on immigration detention and the damage done to mental and physical health by detention. Timely case resolution may also reduce the impact of uncertainty and instability regarding their immigration status on migrants and reduce the human cost of immigration.”<sup>77</sup>

**Detention is expensive and ineffective (with very low post-detention removal rates).**

## 6. Recommendation

**Avoid moving refugees and asylum seekers to different accommodation (after their initial placement) without their consent, unless there are exceptional circumstances, as this will impede their meaningful integration.**

### 6.1. Rationale

Moving accommodation is acknowledged to be stressful and disruptive, especially for individuals with children whose education may be interrupted by the move, and those who are vulnerable and rely upon local support networks. Evidence shows the importance of building social connections and links and that these are ruptured by repeated moves. This ties in with the Commission's wider recommendations to shift responsibility away from the Home Office and towards local integration partnerships.

### 6.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. Evidence overwhelmingly shows that relocation and dispersal negatively impact social inclusion through the severing of social bonds.
2. Data from the Neighbourly Lab survey show that that three in four respondents have been moved to a different part of the UK at least once, whilst one in four had been moved two or more times: "Many of our interviewees described a continuous cycle of relocation, particularly during their time in the

**Many of our interviewees described a continuous cycle of relocation, particularly during their time in the asylum system. This massively impacts their ability to integrate within a community as their first 2-4 years in the country are so transient. This is experienced even more profoundly in the first year of arrival, as people are often moved 2-3 times.**

### 6.2. Practicalities

Accommodation providers should implement measures to foster integration and help refugees settle, and mechanisms to ensure transfers are arranged only with consent or in exceptional circumstances. Providers should:

- a. Be required to provide helpful information to asylum seekers about the local area such as: locations of medical services, schools and voluntary organisations (achieved through disseminating the Welcome Packs and Welcome Hubs, see recommendations 14 and 15).
- b. Ensure training is provided to their staff to deal sensitively with difficulties experienced by asylum seekers and apply a trauma-informed approach to their work (see recommendation 16).
- c. Provide accommodation appropriate to the needs of the resident, for example, single women, women with children, disabled asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, LGBTQIA+, and other groups with protected characteristics.

asylum system. This massively impacts their ability to integrate within a community as their first two to four years in the country are so transient. This is experienced even more profoundly in the first year of arrival, as people are often moved two to three times. More significantly, the quality of the accommodation in people's first year is poor as they are moved around places like hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation.<sup>78</sup>

3. Dispersal also represents a challenge to integration when refugees are dispersed to rural or deprived areas, which is becoming increasingly common. As one Birmingham City Council worker testified at the Birmingham hearing: "In theory, anybody can be dispersed to any part of the UK. However, that's in only theory because in practice, if you still use the same money to procure houses everywhere you will end up dispersing mainly to socially deprived areas" (Birmingham Local Engagement Hearing).



## Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



# 72%

of Refugees and Asylum Seekers had been moved to a different part of the UK at least once

Neighbourly Lab (March 2024)

4. The dispersal of refugees to such areas often means that there is a lack of frontline services on the ground, as well as potential social hostility, which represent further challenges for integration. Several panellists at the London, Newcastle, and Manchester Hearings – including council officers and lived experience voices – called for more local authority oversight and involvement in the asylum system. Currently, Local Authorities have no say over how and where people are housed in the area. Often LAs have little or no notice that new asylum seekers and refugees have been housed in

the area. A significant number of respondents from local authorities and civil society organisations indicated that they would welcome a place-based approach to housing and dispersal. This was echoed by stakeholders, lived experience voices, and local government representatives, who told the Commission that they would welcome a place-based approach to funding and housing that gave more power to the local level.

*Below: Commission Chair Ed Kessler talking with a client who became a member of staff at Brushstrokes Community Project.*



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# Education and English Language Provision

## Principles

Access to education has been shown to be a pathway for integration, whether it be access to English language learning for adults or access to mainstream schooling and higher education for young people. Refugees and asylum seekers should be able to receive the educational and English language support needed to enable them to secure employment, to forge social and professional connections and, ultimately, to thrive.

“ Dad has applied for ESOL but they said it’s full. Lots of people want to go to the ESOL class. My dad also volunteers and is trying to improve English but he knows so little it is harder without the classes. ”

*A young person who lives with her father in a northern city and gave evidence to the Commission. They are both currently seeking asylum.*

## 7. Recommendation

**Provide refugees and asylum seekers with access, free of charge, to English Language provision from day one after they arrive in the UK, with local integration partnerships empowered to commission language provision to suit local needs.**

### 7.1. Rationale

Evidence collected by the Commission underscores the importance of English language proficiency in all aspects of integration, including employment, social interaction, and combatting loneliness. Poor language levels impact negatively on mental health and social inclusion, which also hinders people’s ability to engage directly with frontline services and places greater strain on public resources.

Investing early in language provides important skills, including for those who may not ultimately stay in the UK.

Evidence gathered by the Commission identified that third sector support, especially from faith communities, has the potential to play a significant role, and there is an opportunity to galvanise efforts across sectors to harness the power of civil society organisations in a coordinated and streamlined way.

## Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



**22%** had been unable to access English classes due to waiting lists  
**13%** waited for a year or more to access an English class

Neighbourly Lab (March 2024)

**The delay in English learning access for asylum seekers has been shown to have a detrimental impact on long-term integration outcomes, as well as being costly to the taxpayer.**

## 7.2. Practicalities

English language provision for refugees and asylum seekers should be:

- a. Nationally funded, but designed and delivered by local integration partnerships led by Local Authorities in collaboration with the private sector and civil society. This reinforces other recommendations regarding the empowerment of local authorities and communities in partnership with the third sector, and the decentralisation of key integration services.
- b. Implemented consistently, with place-based commissioning for all refugees and asylum seekers, working with local integration partnerships in order to achieve economies of scale.
- c. Developed according to a UK-wide English language strategy (though this is present in the devolved administrations) to overcome a lack of joined up thinking on the overall purpose of English language provision and how it links to skills strategy. This builds on the idea of a “New Settlement for Refugees” that brings existing expertise in devolved administrations and local authorities to bear on national issues.
- d. Subject to a series of minimum standards to quality assure provision.
- e. Streamed according to ability. This can be achieved through the provision of consistent easy-to-access assessment for all, giving a clear understanding of language level and progression. This can be delivered (inexpensively) through an online portal (as recently trialled in Birmingham).<sup>79</sup> Streaming should be based on learning ability, rather than solely current level and provision for those at the start of their English language journey, and take into account broader literacy capabilities, where present.
- f. Build on innovative practice to develop solutions which work for different types of learners. This may include accelerated, intensive courses delivered online – building on the example of STEP Ukraine (an intensive, virtual, 12-week English language and employment programme for Ukrainians in the UK, funded by the UK government and delivered by World Jewish relief).<sup>80</sup> Or they may be delivered in person in community settings, such as children’s centres or libraries and with in-built childcare. Commissioning should allow for provision outside of work hours for those in employment, and with a clear eye on what learners want to get out of English language provision and how they can achieve these goals.
- g. Be creative about co-funding and co-delivering English language provision – building on the skills and capacity of volunteers and civil society as demonstrated through Community Sponsorship, including low-cost or subsidised models of English language provision where this is appropriate, and/or supported by employers.

## 7.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. Asylum seekers in the UK are currently not eligible for government-funded English language teaching (ESOL) until they have waited six months for a decision on their asylum application, at which time they can receive partial funding to cover 50% of the course.<sup>81</sup> The delay in English learning access for asylum seekers has been shown to have a detrimental impact on long-term integration outcomes, as well as being costly to the taxpayer. The LSE Economic Analysis report showed that offering English language and employment support to asylum seekers from day one has the potential to result in a net economic benefit of £1.2 billion to the UK economy in five years in terms of increased employment opportunities, which in turn generates contributions through taxes and reduced social housing costs.<sup>82</sup>
2. Refugees who have been given settled status or who are on resettlement schemes are entitled to ESOL classes, though the Commission heard evidence from multiple sources (including local hearings, lived experience testimony, the Call for Evidence, and Neighbourly Lab survey) on the practical difficulties of accessing such services, from barrier to access, long waiting lists, oversubscription of courses, assessment and qualifications, and the non-linear nature of language learning.

**Studies of international contexts show that greater language proficiency leads to better employment outcomes. In Sweden, for example, refugees were 17% to 19% more likely to find employment following a language training programme.**

*Below: Panellists at the London Hearing.*



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## Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



# 33%

said learning English was the biggest barrier to securing employment.

Neighbourly Lab (March 2024)

3. Evidence from Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)s) shows that there are often discrepancies in individuals' level of English proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing, and that there is a lack of support for learners to develop their speaking proficiency in particular. This can act as a barrier to integration when written and reading skills are not matched by spoken English, thus hindering their ability to interact in everyday scenarios as well as effect employment opportunities and further education.
4. Data from the Neighbourly Lab survey point to the success of English language classes across several measures, including increasing confidence to make friends and improving job prospects.<sup>83</sup> Regional disparities in provision and the frequent movement of asylum seekers to different areas, causing disruptions in their education, contribute to the overall challenge of accessing classes. To address these challenges, survey respondents suggested a need for more equitable and timely access to English language provision, taking into account the unique circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers – this can be achieved through point 7.2.(e) above.
5. The Commission heard evidence regarding access to English language classes, whether due to the timing of classes during the working day (thus conflicting with employment or volunteering opportunities), a lack of access to transport to reach classes or additional services such as childcare provision to enable women to attend.
6. Data from the International Comparisons report shows that some countries have had success in language training through informal “buddy” systems such as the “Family-Danish” programme in Denmark, which helps refugees and migrants integrate the Danish language into daily life at home. Furthermore, the support provided by volunteers and civil society organisations, e.g. the Red Cross and the Danish Refugee Council, plays a significant role in the municipal support scheme.
7. Evidence from both local hearings and international comparisons shows that civil society contributes positively to language learning in more informal environments such as cafés and at home. This offers an opportunity to consolidate these informal networks and to bring them into the infrastructure of language provision in the UK in a positive and cost-effective way.
8. Studies of international contexts show that greater language proficiency leads to better employment outcomes. In Sweden, for example, refugees were 17% to 19% more likely to find employment following a language training programme. Language support also resulted in refugees being able to acquire jobs that require more communication and pay a higher salary and also enabled younger people to gain professional qualifications.

## 8. Recommendation

**Enable all refugee and asylum-seeking children to access mainstream education immediately, no matter when they arrive in the school year. Schools and colleges should be incentivised to provide appropriate education and support.**

### 8.1. Rationale

Schools and colleges are places of integration and inclusion, supporting the aspirations and ambitions of all children.

Although the UK provides access to mainstream schooling for all new arrivals, (including unaccompanied children), evidence has highlighted practical barriers to access, such as children arriving after the school year has started, and pupil premium funding being lost within school budgets.

- d. For 16 to 18-year-olds in the care system, it is vital that social workers engage in existing dual and triple planning processes to plan for further education to ensure that young people have a full understanding of their options once they reach 18.
- e. Develop expertise and leadership in inclusion, exemplified by the Sanctuary Schools Programme. A recent Department for Education report the benefit such as of interventions such as the Linking Network, an organisational structure across schools that introduces children to diversity and

**Whilst recognising the vital importance of learning English, refugee children should have full access to the curriculum, including in their native language where feasible and appropriate, in order to help ensure they can meet their potential.**

### 8.2. Practicalities

- a. Schools and colleges should receive targeted funding for in-classroom support for refugee and asylum-seeking children, including language support. This is particularly important in areas which see relatively high numbers of arrivals in a short space of time. This should build on the existing pupil premium available for unaccompanied children, which should be effectively targeted by engaging with local integration partnerships, (such as those modelled on Migration Impact Funding).<sup>84</sup>
- b. Recognising the very specific mental health needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children, schools and colleges should provide a trauma-informed approach to teaching and pastoral support. This ties into the broader recommendations on adopting a trauma-informed approach to health and mental healthcare for refugees and asylum seekers (see Recommendation 16).
- c. Whilst recognising the vital importance of learning English, refugee children should have full access to the curriculum, including in their native language where feasible and appropriate, in order to help ensure they can meet their potential.

promotes sustained, classroom-based contact between pupils from demographically diverse backgrounds.<sup>85</sup>

### 8.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. Evidence shows that accessing appropriate primary, secondary, and higher education can enable individuals to improve their employment and integration outcomes, as well as having a positive impact on mental health and social inclusion.
2. Schools do not currently receive funding for children who arrive after the school year starts, which means that children are often made to wait until the beginning of the next school year. For example, the Commission heard evidence from unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) that many arrived in October or November but had to wait until the following September to enter the school system. This results in an increased disruption to the children's educational journey.

## Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



**76%**  
of parents felt that school was supportive of their situation as refugees/asylum seekers

Neighbourly Lab (March 2024)

3. There is only sparse evidence on access to or quality of education, including higher education access and access to schools for children, although it has been suggested that some asylum-seeking children have been excluded from other activities for children.<sup>86</sup> Unlike the living conditions factor, which is mostly applicable to those seeking asylum, difficulties with education relate mostly to those who have already gained their refugee status.
7. Delays in school allocation, often due to a lack of capacity, can deprive children of education and expose them to exploitation or abuse. Dispersal can also pose a challenge to schools, whereby refugee children are being enrolled in schools in rural and deprived areas that may lack funding or understanding of the specific needs of children and their families. Panellists at the Hereford Hearing pointed to the need for effective parent

### **The Commission heard evidence from unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that many arrived in October or November but had to wait until the following September to enter the school system.**

4. Education provides the tools for new arrivals to integrate and hence serves as a measure and a means of integration. For example, education allows new arrivals to access employment opportunities, to make social connections and to understand local culture better.<sup>87</sup>
5. Schools and colleges can act as key sites for integration, especially for younger children. Data from the Neighbourly Lab survey showed that three in four parents felt that their school was supportive and 69% reported that their children had made friends at school. However, while schools are often cited as sites of integration for children, the same is not found as much among parents, with three in four parents reporting that they did not get to know other parents well.<sup>88</sup>
6. Asylum seekers – especially Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) – face restrictions on entering higher education while awaiting their status, limiting their ability to integrate and become self-reliant.
- partnerships, and the importance of working together across home, school, and community to help support children entering new education environments.
8. Schools also face particular challenges around providing education to UASC. Multiple stakeholders called for a trauma-informed approach to education and safeguarding for vulnerable children. Again, lack of funding and adequate staff training can serve as a barrier to successful integration of UASC within schools. A number of UASC who testified to the Commission at the All4One meeting expressed frustration regarding the stipulation for them to only attend English classes at college. Many of them had interests in pursuing studies in other subjects such as Engineering, Maths, IT, and Science. UASC also need additional support to enter, and stay, in education, according to frontline stakeholders.

## 9. Recommendation

**Provide language access/assistance to all refugees and asylum seekers for the initial six-month period after arrival.**

### 9.1. Rationale

Language learning and language assistance are two related but distinct concepts. Language learning involves providing refugees with the opportunity to learn the language of their host country, which can help them integrate into their new community. Language assistance, on the other hand, refers to the provision of support to refugees who are struggling with language barriers. Such assistance can take many forms, including interpretation, translation, and availability of resources in their native language. The goal of language assistance is to help refugees overcome language barriers and access the resources they need without significant delays.

Whilst learning English is a gateway skill, access to some information in a variety of languages can be vital in the early stages post arrival in order that refugees and asylum seekers can access services and navigate the system. This should complement learning English or Welsh.

The value of language access in the UK was highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when accessing accurate information was vital for everyone in the community.

**The value of language access in the UK was highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when accessing accurate information was vital for everyone in the community.**

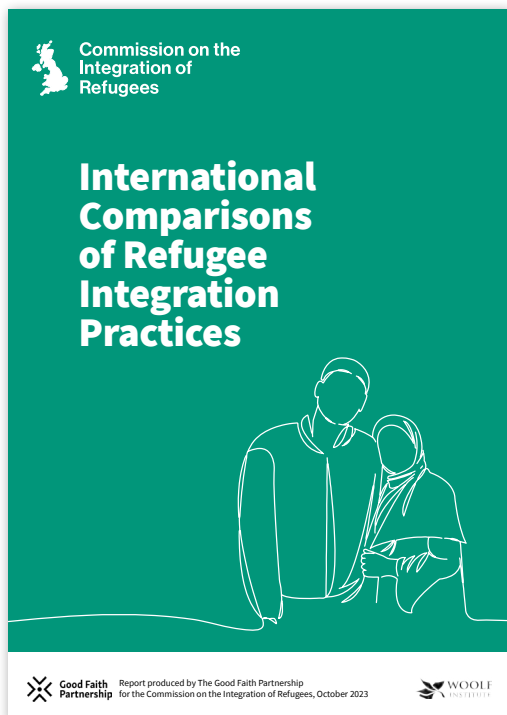
*Below: Panellists at the Birmingham Local Engagement Hearing.*



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## From Arrival to Integration is based on six pillars of research



Left: 3. *International Comparisons*

Below: 4. *Integration of Refugees in the UK*



### 9.2. Practicalities

- a. Orientation/Welcome should include language access (alongside learning English or Welsh) to help navigate the early stages of life in the UK. This could be provided through the Welcome Hubs, as suggested by Recommendation 15.
- b. Diaspora groups and NGOs should lead in the delivery of language access locally, following national guidelines and standards to ensure consistency, exploit economies of scale across the UK and allow for the use of existing and emerging technologies for translation and interpretation.
- c. Learn from successful international examples (such as the iSpeakAtlanta programme).<sup>89</sup>

### 9.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. The Commission has heard evidence on the lack of appropriate language assistance for new arrivals, especially lack of adequate interpretation translation services and information about how to navigate everyday scenarios. In the words of one participant from the Neighbourly Lab qualitative interviews: “I didn’t know how to go and talk to the GP, how to fill an application form, how to talk on the phone.”<sup>90</sup>
2. Evidence from other countries has shown that “buddy systems” and other forms of informal community or volunteer networks can contribute to language access and assistance for new arrivals. This could be designed and delivered locally through the Welcome Hubs outlined in Recommendation 15.

**In the words of one participant from the Neighbourly Lab qualitative interviews: “I didn’t know how to go and talk to the GP, how to fill an application form, how to talk on the phone.”**

## 10. Recommendation

**Ensure that appropriate pathways are in place for refugees and asylum seekers to meet their full educational potential by recognising qualifications and providing access to further and higher education.**

### 10.1. Rationale

Underemployment remains a major challenge for refugee and asylum-seeking communities in the UK, which not only adversely impacts individuals who are not able to reach their potential, but also for society, overlooking an opportunity to address skills shortages.

Qualifications and skills recognition is essential both to education and employment for refugees and asylum seekers, illustrating the multiple connections between recommendations.

### 10.2. Practicalities

- a. Work closely with UK ENIC to improve recognition of qualifications for refugees, in order that refugees and asylum seekers eligible to work can access employment at the right level for their qualifications.
- b. Further develop sector-specific programmes in shortage sectors, such as healthcare, to enable refugees to access jobs in shortage professions such as nursing and medicine.
- c. Work closely with universities to develop existing Sanctuary Scholarship programmes, increasing their scale and scope, as well as encouraging access opportunities to higher and further education for asylum seekers, such as offering home fees for asylum seekers who cannot afford international fees.

**Underemployment remains a major challenge for refugee and asylum-seeking communities in the UK, which not only adversely impacts individuals who are not able to reach their potential, but also for society, overlooking an opportunity to address skills shortages.**

### 10.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. The Commission has heard evidence from multiple streams showing that many refugees and asylum seekers are unaware of the educational opportunities available to them. This lack of awareness can lead to missed opportunities for education, training, and personal development. Female refugees and asylum seekers face particular issues in accessing education, due to the impact of violence, poverty, and a lack of childcare.
2. Longer waiting times on asylum applications are associated with a negative effect on long-term employment outcomes.<sup>91</sup> This is because, whilst they are waiting for their applications to be approved, individuals are unable to become financially independent, integrate into the community, or develop their communication skills through work or socialising.<sup>92</sup>
3. Respondents at the Local Hearings and Call for Evidence testified that refugees and asylum seekers may have qualifications or training that are not recognised in the UK, and often struggle to translate or transfer their documents or certifications. For example, in the thematic analysis of stakeholder interviews conducted by Neighbourly Lab, one key theme was that: “Refugees and asylum seekers commonly have to downgrade job skills after arrival”. Data from the survey also found that one in three respondents is unable to use their existing skills in their lives in the UK.

#### Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



**76%**

**do not feel that they were contributing to society as much as they would like**

Neighbourly Lab (March 2024)

## Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



**34%**

never got to use the skills they learned in their qualification but wanted to

Neighbourly Lab (March 2024)

**Existing scholarship highlights the additional challenge of job matching. Qualifications obtained outside the UK are not easily recognised or translated into a UK context, which contributes to underemployment and unemployment.**

4. Existing scholarship shows that the quality of life and mental health of refugees and asylum seekers depends on factors such as the type of employment they access, social relations at work, and their living conditions.<sup>93</sup> For example, refugees placed in rural areas in Japan had limited access to jobs and found getting to work difficult because of limited and unaffordable transport options. Conversely, in Denmark refugees placed in an area with a strong labour market were more likely to access long-term employment, with their annual income increasing by USD \$900 in 2015 prices.<sup>94</sup>
5. Evidence suggests that the difficulty in transferring skills, barriers to employment, and downgrading of employment prospects has a significant and detrimental effect on individuals' mental health, (as well as a wasted opportunity to tap into the talent pool). Respondents to the Neighbourly Lab survey reported experiencing a negative impact from not being able to use their skills and qualifications in day-to-day life.
6. Delays in obtaining biometric cards can prevent refugees from enrolling in schools or accessing employment.
7. Existing scholarship highlights the additional challenge of job matching. Qualifications obtained outside the UK are not easily recognised or translated into a UK context, which contributes to underemployment and unemployment.
8. Evidence shows that the level and type of employment are significant for health. Being in low-skilled jobs – especially for well-qualified individuals – is associated with a higher likelihood of health problems.<sup>95</sup> Those who migrated to seek asylum, as opposed to those who arrive as economic migrants or as students, also have worse health outcomes. They are less likely to be able to move out of low paid work, which is a further stress on their health,<sup>96</sup> which in turn limits ability to work, reducing overall participation in employment, which is a further strain on health.<sup>97</sup>
9. Evidence also suggests that the difficulty in transferring skills, barriers to employment, and downgrading employment prospects have a significant and detrimental effect on individuals' mental health (as well as a wasted opportunity to tap into the talent pool). Respondents to the Neighbourly Lab survey overwhelmingly reported experiencing a negative impact from not being able to use their skills and qualifications in day-to-day life, with 78% of asylum seekers and 73% of refugees stating that the fact of being unable to use their skills means that they are “not able to contribute to society.”

# Employment and Entrepreneurship

## Principles

The ability to seek employment and become financially independent is widely seen to be a fundamental aspect of integration, with numerous studies pointing to the significance of financial security and self-determination for mental health and well-being, as well as being of financial benefit to wider society. Conversely, not being able to earn a living can lead to low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, mental health problems, and inhibit integration. It is also costly to the public purse.

“ Honestly speaking, what makes me even more frustrated is that where I’ve been volunteering for a year every now and then there’s an opening for a job. There are plenty of jobs I could do and I’m really happy here. I really value the community here, and I feel I’m valued. But I’m really restricted because I am still waiting for my leave to remain so I can do all these useful things. There are lots of opportunities. There’s a bright future for me here. I’m ready to contribute, to help people, to pay taxes, but I’m not allowed to. ”

*A man living in Scotland who is seeking asylum and took part in the Glasgow Hearing*

## 11. Recommendation

**Make people in the asylum system eligible for general employment after six months of waiting for their asylum decision. This eligibility should not be limited to the jobs on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).**

### 11.1. Rationale

Refugees and people in the asylum system (including adult dependents of the main applicant) should be able to earn their own living as soon as practicable. The rules should be as simple and clear as possible so that employers can have confidence that they are not breaking the law by employing asylum seekers and refugees.

The evidence put to the Commission showed that not having permission to work while in the asylum system is a major barrier to integration:

- › Employment is a major route to integration and not being able to secure it causes stigma, alienation, the feeling of being a burden to society, and increases the risk of poverty and inequality.

- › Having permission to work after six months reduces dependency on public funds and improves self-reliance, self-esteem and mental health.
- › Economic models show that allowing asylum seekers the right to work would significantly reduce public expenditure and boost GDP through increased tax-revenue and national insurance contributions.<sup>98</sup>

### 11.2. Practicalities

- a. The right to work after six months should be automatic and not be based on Home Office discretion.
- b. This timeframe is based on the government’s own target for determining asylum claims within six months. Allowing people in the asylum system to work at six months returns the rights that were removed in the 2002 Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act.
- c. Some people in the asylum system will be unable to work, for example because of childcare and other caring responsibilities or ill-health, and will require Government support (as is currently the case).



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### 11.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. In September 2020, the Home Office reported that “Economic rights do not act as a pull factor for asylum seekers. A review of the relationship between Right to Work and numbers of asylum applications concluded that no study reported a long-term correlation between labour market access and destination choice.”<sup>99</sup>
3. The right to work has emerged as one of the most important themes across multiple strands of evidence gathered by the Commission. Stakeholders across sectors expressed support for allowing asylum seekers the right to work, (though there was some divergence as to the timeframe). While a minority of respondents to the Call for

**Employment is a major route to integration and not being able to secure it causes stigma, alienation, the feeling of being a burden to society, and increases the risk of poverty and inequality.**

2. Current UK policy prohibits asylum seekers from working in the UK for at least 12 months, after which period they are only allowed to work if they are able to prove that their asylum claim is outstanding “through no fault of their own”<sup>100</sup> and are restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) published by the Home Office.<sup>101</sup> This policy was introduced under the Nationality, Immigration, and Asylum Act 2002, which removed the right to work after six months in the asylum system.<sup>102</sup>
4. The Commission heard concerns that the current system effectively forces asylum seekers into illegal work, and that the government welfare provision of £47.39 a week (£6.77 a day) is not sufficient to live on. The Commission received evidence regarding the difficulties of living on this allowance. Concerns were expressed that the rising cost of living and extended delays in processing asylum claims could push people into illegal or unregulated employment areas, where there is much potential for exploitation and abuse.

Above: Panellists at the Glasgow Hearing.

5. A 2022 study published in the *Journal of Social Policy* points to the precarity of employment conditions for asylum seekers who seek remuneration outside the official labour market. They were identified as “being embedded in the most insecure employment sectors. Zero hours contracts, precarious positions and undocumented work were consistent features of the working conditions that they were encountering.”<sup>103</sup>
6. According to the Economic Analysis conducted on behalf of the Commission, waiting for the right to work (i.e., before gaining refugee status) for one extra year results in a 4% to 5% reduced opportunity of finding employment, which is equivalent to 16% to 23% reduced opportunity of employment compared to the average rate of employment.
7. Many participants in the local hearings and those who submitted to the Call for Evidence made explicit links between access to employment and long-term integration outcomes, especially around issues of self-determination, self-sufficiency, and mental health.
9. When language and employment support are provided, refugees have a higher probability of finding a job, and a job with a higher salary. This in turn increases the contribution through taxes and shifts housing costs from Government to refugees, and also reduces costs related to welfare support. The probability of homelessness and rough sleeping decreases and thus there are also reductions in costs related to accommodation for homeless refugees, costs of crime related to homelessness (such as petty theft), and Accident & Emergency costs for homeless refugees. By providing such support, benefits outweigh costs after three years, and by the end of year five produce an overall net economic benefit of £1.2 billion.<sup>106</sup>
10. A June 2023 report produced by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research estimated that the annual impact from allowing people seeking asylum the immediate right to work would reduce government expenditure by £6.7 billion, interpreted as a total effect of fiscal savings, increased tax-revenues and positive effect on output, thus reducing public debt.<sup>107</sup>

### **Business owners and industry representatives at the London Local Engagement Hearing also testified directly to the Commission that they did not support the current embargo on the right to work from a business and development perspective.**

8. Lift the Ban – a coalition of over 200 organisations campaigning for the right to work for asylum seekers – gave evidence at the Commission’s London hearing in March 2023. They stated that 71% of the British public support lifting the ban on asylum seekers’ working.<sup>104</sup> In February 2023, the International Rescue Committee published figures from a YouGov poll of 2,000 business decision-makers across industries that 68% of the general population supported policy change and thought that increasing asylum seekers’ access to work would have a positive impact on the economy as a whole.<sup>105</sup> Business owners and industry representatives at the London Local Engagement Hearing also testified directly to the Commission that they did not support the current embargo on the right to work from a business and development perspective.
11. A similar study conducted by the Lift the Ban coalition estimated that the annual net benefit to the UK economy of allowing asylum seekers the right to work as a result of increased contribution through taxes after six months would be £356.9 million annually (if 100% of these individuals were employed on the national average wage).<sup>108</sup>
12. The Commission has heard evidence from both lived experience and stakeholder voices testifying to the restrictive nature of the Shortage Occupation List (SOL). The existence of the list thus “effectively bans most asylum seekers from working in the UK.”<sup>109</sup>
13. According to the New Scots Integration Strategy restrictions imposed by the SOL create a form of “enforced idleness” which both “restricts their opportunities to access labour market” and also “creates a negative stigma around refugees struggling to enter the labour market.”<sup>110</sup>

Commissioner Hanna Kienzler visits the clothing service at Brushstrokes Community Project.



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## 12. Recommendation

**Make people in the asylum system eligible for jobs on the Shortage Occupation List from day one. Consideration should be given to a Government-backed finance scheme to assist those granted refugee status who wish to set up in business.**

### 12.1. Rationale

The country stands to benefit from filling jobs on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) and from entrepreneurship.

The evidence before the Commission demonstrates that many people in the asylum system come from countries where setting up in business is commonplace. Giving consideration to allowing them to earn a living in this way would help to reduce reliance on public funds and accelerate integration processes.

We also heard strong arguments for allowing people in the asylum system to become self-employed from day one. This is something that we would ask the government to contemplate carefully, including giving consideration to a Government-backed finance scheme to assist asylum seekers who wish to set up in business (and to be made aware of the risks of investing their own money or taking out loans before they acquire refugee status).

### 12.2. Practicalities

- a. Linking the right to work from day one to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) is easy for employers and the general public to understand.
- b. Many asylum seekers have skills, such as language skills, which they could offer on a self-employed basis without detriment to the UK labour market.
- c. Consideration should be given to a Government-backed finance scheme to help those granted refugee status or the right to remain in the UK to set up in business or register as sole traders.

**Many asylum seekers have skills, such as language skills, which they could offer on a self-employed basis without detriment to the UK labour market.**

- d. People should be informed of the risks of investing their own money or taking out loans before they acquire refugee status. They should not be encouraged to do so.
- e. People should be educated about relevant tax laws and obligations.

### 12.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. The UK is currently experiencing high levels of job vacancies, including in key sectors such as the NHS,<sup>111</sup> transport services, and retail.<sup>112</sup> Recent figures published by the ONS show that the estimated number of job vacancies in September–November 2023 was 949,000, a decrease of 45,000, down by 4.5% since June to August 2023, but still significantly higher than pre-Covid levels of 803,000 in the same period in 2019.
2. Refugees and asylum seekers often possess a high level of education. Evidence presented to the House of Lords on 18 January 2024 identified about half of all refugees possessing a qualification equivalent to a UK A-level and above, and 38% of Syrian refugees with a university degree.<sup>113</sup>
3. According to the Neighbourly Lab survey, one in three respondents were educated to undergraduate level and one in four to master's level. The Ukrainian respondents had a higher level of education than the other respondents, which increased the total number with bachelor's and master's degrees or equivalent. However, even when looking at non-Ukrainian respondents, 26% had bachelor's degrees or equivalent, while 12% had master's degrees or equivalent.<sup>114</sup>



## Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



**33%** had a bachelor's degree or equivalent

**26%** had a master's degree or equivalent

Neighbourly Lab survey of 755 refugees and asylum seekers (314 Ukrainians, 441 non-Ukrainians). 26% of non-Ukrainian respondents had bachelor's degrees or equivalent and 12% had master's degrees or equivalent (March 2024).

4. Business owners and industry representatives who gave evidence to the Commission expressed frustration with the current policy and urged the government to consider giving asylum seekers access to jobs on the SOL immediately after arrival. For example, a representative from the London Chamber of Commerce, told Commissioners at the London Local Engagement Hearing that: "From a business perspective the current embargo [on right to work] makes no sense as there is a skills crisis in London across many sectors. The policy is therefore immoral, illogical and contrary to UK PLC. 'Global Britain' needs a rethink on this policy."
6. In its annual report published in December 2023, the Migration Advisory Committee advised that "only a small number of occupations be included on the SOL and suggested that the government may wish to consider whether the SOL is the appropriate mechanism to allow lower-paid workers to come to the UK."<sup>117</sup>
7. In September 2020, the Home Office reported that: "Very few migrants have any experience of a welfare state such as exists in the UK and imagine that they will be able to (if not expected to) work and support themselves upon arrival."

**From a business perspective the current embargo [on right to work] makes no sense as there is a skills crisis in London across many sectors. The policy is therefore immoral, illogical and contrary to UK PLC. 'Global Britain' needs a rethink on this policy."**

5. Talent Beyond Boundaries outlined that across the UK, Displaced Talent candidates had combined income of £5m and contributed c. £1m in taxes to the UK economy. While this scheme demonstrate the benefits of bringing skilled workers into the UK economy, it is limited to those outside the UK (and does not have a similar model for accessing the skills and qualifications of refugees and asylum seekers already in the UK).<sup>115</sup> Data from the international comparisons suggest that greater employment support and access to the labour market can significantly reduce calls on public resources, especially around welfare provision and accommodation. However, interventions would be needed in tandem with coordinated approached to English learning, skills and qualifications vetting, and health.<sup>116</sup>
8. The Commission also heard how many refugees and asylum seekers come from countries with strong traditions of entrepreneurship and small family businesses, and thus have the potential to become employers themselves and to contribute more widely to the UK economy if appropriate support and employment mechanisms were in place.

This finding has been corroborated by numerous studies, including a meta-review produced by the University of Warwick in 2016.<sup>118</sup>

## 13. Recommendation

**Create a programme of employment support for all refugees and those asylum seekers who are allowed to work.**

### 13.1. Rationale

One of the major challenges faced by asylum seekers who have the right to work in the UK is their limited knowledge and understanding of the country's labour market. Evidence has shown that specialised assistance with finding vacancies or training opportunities such as apprenticeships, filling in application forms, writing CVs and interview skills can overcome these barriers, particularly when developed in partnership with employers.

The financial benefits of increased employment following access to a support package will outweigh the costs to the state within the third year after arrival. According to the LSE economic model, the total net economic benefit of expediting asylum application processing and providing ESOL and employment support is in excess of £570 million at the end of the third year, and £1.2 billion by the end of year five.<sup>119</sup>

### 13.2. Practicalities

- a. There should be a programme of employment support for all refugees and those in the asylum system who are permitted to work. This should build on existing group-specific programmes and be developed and delivered in partnership with employers.
- b. Employment support should be customised and personalised where possible.
- c. UK potential employers should be informed of refugees' eligibility for employment and the potential offered by their transferable skills.
- d. The relevant government department should provide a one-stop system whereby employers can check asylum seekers and refugees' eligibility to work with ease and confidence, building on and improving the existing Share Code model.<sup>120</sup>

### 13.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. The Commission found that asylum seekers who are given the right to work face a number of barriers accessing employment. Key issues that arose from the local hearings and Call for Evidence, and the review of existing literature, included difficulties in transferring skills or finding training opportunities, lack of English language provision, issues of accreditation, and the limitations created by the SOL. Many of these barriers also apply to volunteering opportunities.
2. Currently, refugees receive limited tailored or personal support to find a job. The Commission heard evidence regarding the variable outcomes of Jobcentre Plus support, whose staff may lack adequate training and awareness of specific issues facing refugees. A 2021 report by the Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford highlighted that "bespoke job search assistance can improve the labour market outcomes of refugees". They cite data from Sweden suggesting that "intensive job market coaching can increase the employment rate of refugees by 6 percentage points."<sup>121</sup>
3. Refugees and asylum seekers also testified the lack of UK employment experience and unfamiliarity with the UK labour market can serve as barriers to those who have the right to work. These may mean they have gaps in their CVs, are unfamiliar with job interview techniques, and are uncertain how to search and apply for jobs. The lack of digital skills was also identified as a barrier. The New Scots Integration Strategy also drew attention to how "refugees' lack of understanding of the labour market, pathways to employment and their options, including vocational training and apprenticeships, can limit their opportunities to gain meaningful employment, which makes best use of their skills."<sup>122</sup>

## Total annual costs and benefits of expediting asylum application processing and providing ESOL and employment support\*

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Costs	£2,027,290,175	£1,165,747,387	£445,666,240	£171,701,571	£68,855,805
Benefits	£59,499,706	£556,739,641	£1,015,985,001	£1,236,767,493	£1,309,673,287

\*All costs and benefits are discounted at 3.5%. The full tables with the 95% confidence intervals are presented in the appendix.

**Evidence has shown that specialised assistance with finding vacancies or training opportunities such as apprenticeships, filling in application forms, writing CVs and interview skills can overcome these barriers, particularly when developed in partnership with employers.**

*Below: Panellists and Commisioners at the Glasgow Hearing.*



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4. The economic model produced by LSE shows that when language and employment support are provided, refugees have a higher probability of finding a job (with a higher salary). This in turn increases the contribution through taxes and shifts housing costs from Government to refugees, and also reduces costs related to welfare support. The probability of homelessness and rough sleeping also decreases and thus there are also reductions in associated costs. According to the economic model, benefits outweigh the costs by the third year.<sup>123</sup>
5. Evidence from other countries shows that access to employment can enhance integration outcomes, but should not be considered in isolation and certain conditions need to be met in order to achieve the benefits (both to the individual and to society). For example, in Denmark and Sweden, which operate a “job-first” policy, early employment can “reduce the reliance on public funds, such as accommodation or subsistence, allowing applicants to cover living expenses and/or rent”.<sup>124</sup>
6. Studies show that unrestricted access to the job market for asylum seekers without adequate support or sensitivity to wider social context does not necessarily lead to better long-term integration outcomes, especially if early employment is prioritised over language, digital skills and social inclusion. A more holistic approach to supporting refugees and asylum seekers to access employment is required.
7. Employers can play a vital role in supporting refugees into employment and to develop in their job roles, though this is underdeveloped at present. Engagement with refugees and asylum seekers can be valuable for business, both in harnessing their skills and talents and as part of broader commitments to corporate social responsibility.<sup>125</sup> Research by the UNHCR highlights tangible actions that employers can

**Refugees and asylum seekers also testified the lack of UK employment experience and unfamiliarity with the UK labour market can serve as barriers to refugees and asylum seekers who have the right to work.**

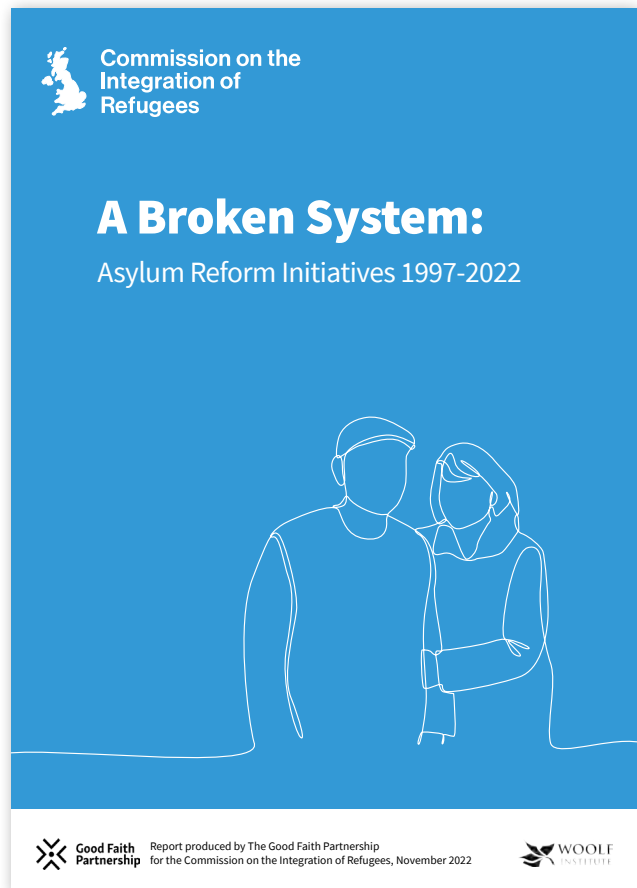
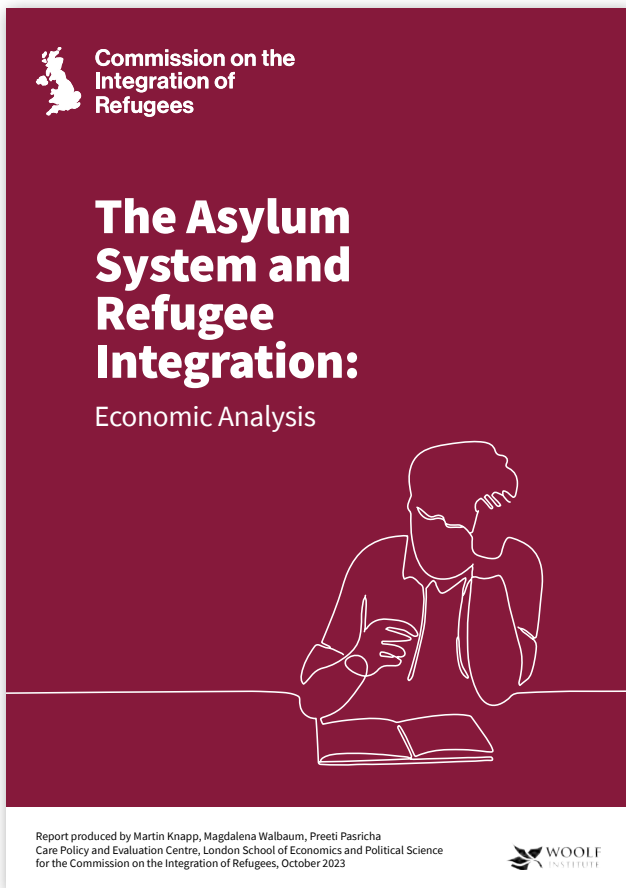
take to improve their recruitment processes to support refugee communities (and other underrepresented groups). These include providing work experience placements, buddying and mentorship programmes in the workplace, and more targeted initiatives such as embedding English language provision in the workplace and supporting skills recognition of refugees. Many employers are already leading by example, such as the partnership between IKEA and charity Breaking Barriers which has supported 155 refugees to take customer service-focused English language classes and placed 30 refugees into work or Waitrose’s partnership with the STEP Ukraine training programme, which offers work placements to resettled refugees.<sup>126</sup>

8. In September 2023, the Home Office announced the launch of its Refugee Employability Programme (REP), which is investing £52m over the course of the next two years. It provides personalised employment and integration support to refugees and individuals who arrived on specialised programmes for Afghan refugees. Under the scheme, “people will receive a personal development plan that will be tailored to their ambitions and personal circumstances. This will range from skills courses, support with CV writing and job applications, work experience opportunities, and enhanced English language training, including access to formal and informal classes, online learning and resources and conversational classes.”<sup>127</sup> The programme will be open to all those granted refugee status

or Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. Evidence gathered by the Commission suggests that such a scheme could prove to be successful, but that it will need to be delivered in conjunction with language and integration support, as well as a more comprehensive skills and qualifications audit.

9. The Commission heard evidence from stakeholders, businesses, and lived experience voices regarding the ineffectiveness of the current Share Code model.<sup>128</sup> Business leaders expressed frustration and confusion regarding the lack of clear guidance on employability, while lived experience voices and stakeholders confirmed that the Share Codes are often implemented in piecemeal, inconsistent, locally-specific, and siloed ways.

## From Arrival to Integration is based on six pillars of research



Above left: 5. *The Asylum System and Refugee Integration: Economic Analysis*  
Above right: 6. *A Broken System: Asylum Reform Initiatives 1997-2022*

# Social Inclusion

## Principles

Enabling refugees and asylum seekers to feel included and connected to UK society has been shown to have a direct impact on integration outcomes. In order to become integrated members of British society, refugees and asylum seekers need to feel safe, respected, welcomed, and have a sense of belonging and a network of connections to the community in which they reside. Social inclusion is a dynamic multi-directional process that includes new arrivals and local people, as well as civil society, the media, politicians, and policymakers.

“ It began by leaving food outside our door. During Ramadan I shared some food and sweets outside my door and then two of my neighbours began to leave food outside their door as well. One was Muslim and one was not. And then we all started talking and became friends. It was six years ago and we’re still in touch and they’re always telling me to come back and visit. ”

*A refugee woman living in a northern city who took part in the Neighbourly Lab qualitative interviews*

## 14. Recommendation

**Provide a ‘Welcome to UK’ pack for all refugees and asylum seekers upon arrival, learning from and building on existing examples.**

### 14.1. Rationale

Social inclusion is an essential part of the process of integration, and we understand integration to be a shared responsibility between all stakeholders including refugees, asylum seekers, local people and institutions.

Although the UK government does currently provide a Welcome Guide for Refugees,<sup>129</sup> much of the information is out of date, too general, not widely disseminated, and not specific to the local context. Evidence gathered by the Commission shows that, refugees and asylum seekers receive piecemeal and incomplete information regarding frontline services, local orientation, understanding UK institutions, local practices and cultures and other essential information.

Providing such information in a timely and appropriate manner will improve individuals’ ability to access services and prevent them falling through the cracks. Locally-produced, specific, detailed, and up-to-date Welcome Packs contribute to the Commission’s overall aim to empower local integration partnerships, communities, and civil society to work together with refugees and asylum seekers in a coherent and mutually accountable way in order to facilitate integration pathways.

### 14.2. Practicalities

The ‘Welcome to UK’ pack should be offered on arrival or made available at the earliest opportunity. It will include:

- A guide to the life and cultures in the UK, the asylum process, and information on basic law and order, geographical information and a map of the UK.
- Details of relevant statutory agencies.
- Details of local services, such as lists of GPs, dentists, supermarkets and other shops, libraries, as well as details regarding bin collections, and availability and location of Welcome Hubs, English language classes, and other frontline services.
- An explanation of the role of civil society, as well as existing voluntary groups by and for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Information packs available in multiple languages, online and in print, updated regularly, mobile friendly and interactive, (as seen at [welcomebradford.org](http://welcomebradford.org))
- Emergency contact numbers: police, fire service, ambulance service, and organisations such as Samaritans and Women’s Aid.
- Information on the asylum system, and how to access legal advice and assistance.
- Information on accommodation.

**Respondents at the Belfast Local Engagement Hearing spoke about confusion regarding refuge and recycling timetables, as well as the fact that many newcomers were unfamiliar with the sectarian history of Northern Ireland and struggled to negotiate the political geography of cities such as Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.**

### 14.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. Evidence to the Commission from wide-ranging stakeholders indicate that the first six months post-arrival are critical for refugees and asylum seekers in terms of building social connections and gaining access to services. For example, data from the Neighbourly Lab survey point to a lack of positive correlation between time since arrival and feeling part of UK society, with the first six months being the key window for shaping positive integration experiences.
2. Having access to up-to-date, locally-tailored information would help mitigate the disruption in refugees' lives, and facilitate the forging of networks locally.
3. Evidence from across the evidence streams, especially from lived experience voices, pointed to the lack of consistent, readily available, and up-to-date information for refugees and asylum seekers that would enable them to integrate locally. For example, respondents at the Belfast Local Engagement Hearing spoke about confusion regarding refuge and recycling timetables, as well as the fact that many newcomers were unfamiliar with the sectarian history of Northern Ireland and struggled to negotiate the political geography of cities such as Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.
4. Respondents to the Call for Evidence also highlighted the lack of information about health and mental healthcare services available to refugees and asylum seekers. This included a lack of clarity about the range of healthcare and NHS services available depending on status, costs and fees and lack of provisioning around processes such as how to register with a GP and appropriate access to A&E. Such information could be included within the Welcome Pack.
5. Evidence from the Glasgow local hearing suggests that information sharing mostly falls to civil society, and that in the absence of official information refugees and asylum seekers often rely on word-of-mouth information.
6. Providing accessible, up-to-date information is also crucial in enabling refugees and asylum seekers to familiarise themselves with the asylum system. The Commission heard across multiple evidence streams about the lack of accessible information and legal assistance for new arrivals, which was seen to compound the difficulties they faced. Many individuals reported arriving without a clear understanding of how to claim asylum, leading to confusion and potential mistakes in their application process. Legal aid for these cases was described to the Commission as “inconsistent and insufficient”, resulting in poorly-handled claims and the need for further submissions. Numerous respondents suggested that such lack of clear information is a major reason for the high level of successful appeals to negative asylum decisions. Lack of effective and clear information about the asylum process created “inefficiency” and “inconsistency” within the system itself, and exacerbates issues around the backlog and waiting times, as well as undermining integration processes.
7. Evidence on social inclusion predominantly focuses on how refugees can facilitate their integration, more than how other stakeholders can take action to include refugees. Indeed, it has been noted that some refugees feel responsible for their integration, with little responsibility shared with other stakeholders,<sup>130</sup> even though integration is a multidirectional process.<sup>131</sup>

## 15. Recommendation

**Establish more Welcome Hubs, bringing together the local community, local government, and civil society.**

### 15.1. Rationale

Welcome Hubs are informal spaces that are locally initiated by host communities to provide a wrap-around community response to the needs of people who are new to the area. They may take the form of a drop-in centre giving advice on local authorities, language provision, providing tea and coffee, or even creative activities. Welcome Hubs are community-led and seek to provide a friendly and welcoming environment for all new arrivals to the area, including refugees and asylum seekers.

Welcome Hubs can provide a place for local integration partnerships – including civil society, volunteer networks, faith groups, and local government – to mobilise frontline services for new arrivals. Services offered can include providing appropriate English language lessons and assistance, health and mental healthcare, employment and skills opportunities, and connecting to local people, including existing diaspora communities, to establish buddying and mentoring relationships.

A shift towards Welcome Hubs forms part of the emphasis on empowering local communities and devolved authorities to take ownership of and support the new arrivals in their areas (see recommendation 1). Pilot schemes by the Good Faith Partnership have shown the positive impact of such Hubs.<sup>132</sup>

Welcome Hubs would create services open to all asylum seekers and refugees, and local people, therefore strengthening the local community for the benefit of all.

**Welcome Hubs are informal spaces that are locally initiated by host communities to provide a wrap-around community response to the needs of people who are new to the area.**

### 15.2. Practicalities

Local integration partnerships will have the power to decide where these Welcome Hubs should be located, which could be in community buildings, libraries, Family Hubs, council buildings, or other suitable locations. Welcome Hubs will:

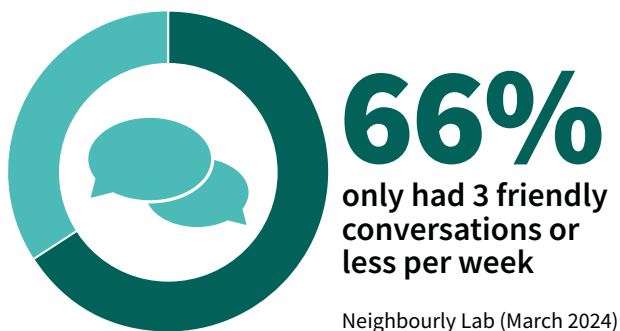
- a. Bring together and learn from existing good practice among volunteer and local community networks, as well as faith communities, in order to offer a tailored and locally-resourced solution to integration. Examples include a “buddy” or “mentor” system, community groups, information about frontline services, volunteering opportunities, tailored employment and education advice, English language classes and assistance.
- b. Provide a safe and welcoming community space for refugees and asylum seekers. Welcome Hubs add local, volunteer-led capacity to existing centralised provision. They do so through providing spaces of community and connection, built around social activities.
- c. Assist and empower refugees and asylum seekers to become independent and integrated into their local and wider communities, and support all newcomers, no matter their immigration status.
- d. Provide a mechanism for statutory bodies to be proactive in engaging the support of private, faith, and civil society sectors.

### 15.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. The quality of social connections possessed by refugees and asylum seekers has a direct impact on their integration outcomes. Yet two-thirds of respondents to the Neighbourly Lab survey reported having fewer than three friendly conversations a week. Lack of such engagement is linked to social isolation, loneliness, and poor mental health outcomes. Despite this, 65% of the survey respondents reported feeling part of British society, at least sometimes. Interactions with neighbours and other refugees and asylum seekers and interactions within community spaces provide the most common opportunities for social connection among the survey cohort. Physical proximity and mutual understanding and engagement emerge as two key factors in fostering positive social connections, often facilitated by civil society or faith-based organisations.<sup>133</sup>



## Survey of Refugees and Asylum Seekers



**Respondents to the Call for Evidence and local hearings also referenced the importance of peer-to-peer networks in promoting cultural orientation and cultivating social bonds.**

2. Evidence gathered by the Commission indicates that refugees and asylum seekers are more likely to make friends with other refugees and asylum seekers than with people from the UK. Of the survey respondents, nine in ten had made at least a few friends who are also refugees and asylum seekers living in the UK.
3. Stakeholders and lived experience voices at the Newcastle, London, Birmingham, and Cardiff local hearings referenced the importance of pre-existing community networks, especially in areas where there may be significant numbers of individuals who are settled from the same country of origin. In such cases, engagement in community spaces, places of worship, and informal community networks are often key in helping to support new arrivals and deliver services.<sup>134</sup>
4. Respondents to the Call for Evidence and local hearings also referenced the importance of peer-to-peer networks in promoting cultural orientation and cultivating social bonds. An example of how such networks could be mobilised comes from Sweden, where previously resettled refugees are employed in the Ljusdal Municipality to support new arrivals to navigate issues such as housing and general cultural orientation. These ‘housing hosts’ are also equipped to answer questions about the locality and how services work. An evaluation of a similar “buddy” scheme in Flanders, Belgium, in which volunteers were partnered with a refugee to offer administrative, emotional, and social support, concluded that “buddy relationships are one among the different levels in which refugee-integration-opportunity structures can be identified.”<sup>135</sup>
5. The Commission identified much evidence pointing to the significance of civil society organisations and networks in supporting refugee integration in the UK. However, while there was widespread appreciation of their role in welcoming and supporting refugees, it was also widely acknowledged across all evidence streams that these services are often patchy, underfunded, uncoordinated, piecemeal, and reliant on volunteers and their goodwill.
6. Social isolation emerged as an issue through all evidence streams, with refugees and asylum seekers reporting feelings of loneliness, isolation, and “stuckness”. Volunteering was often cited as a key facilitator to alleviating such isolation and enabling people to have opportunities to engage with wider society.
7. A recent pilot study testing the scalability and effectiveness of Welcome Hubs in Bristol, Sheffield, and South Gloucestershire conducted by the Good Faith Partnership and Social Finance suggests that the Welcome Hub model “supports grassroots initiatives to be more effective through a wider coordinated structure”, while also being attuned to local contexts: “Welcome Hubs contribute to the wider infrastructure supporting integration, by helping people who are seeking sanctuary to be better connected to their local community, each other, and to relevant services.”<sup>136</sup>
8. Small-scale and grassroots schemes to improve access to transport, such as the Northern Ireland initiative to pilot free public transport for asylum seekers for the first six months (from 1 Nov 2023), or charity-run schemes to provide bicycles to asylum seekers and refugees, have had some limited success.

# Health and Mental Health

## Principles

Health, mental health, and wellbeing are vital to everyone but are especially key to integration since good health supports participation in employment and engagement in wider society. Successful integration in turn supports improved health, mental health, and wellbeing. Health and mental health are, therefore, indicators of positive integration outcomes, as well as being means to support such integration.<sup>137</sup>

“ Once I received my leave to remain I had to leave my hotel but could not find any accommodation. The council told me because I did not have children and I wasn't pregnant I was not a priority. So I became homeless and that really affected my mental health. As a person who is normally at home by 9 or 10pm every evening I had to adjust to being homeless. And the council can't really do anything. My mental health in the UK has been affected even worse than what I was running away from originally out of fear. ”

*A refugee man who took part in the Neighbourly Lab qualitative interviews*

## 16. Recommendation

**Carry out Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (through collaboration between the NHS executive and civil society (including charities, faith groups, and diaspora organisations) to increase understanding of the composition and needs of local refugees and asylum seekers. Findings should inform the planning, development, and offering of relevant, inclusive, and responsive care systems that improve health and address health inequalities.**

**A structural support programme should be developed and implemented to enable refugee and asylum seeker healthcare professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, support workers) to utilise their skills and expertise in the UK.**

### 16.1. Rationale

In line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Constitution, the UK is legally obliged to ensure access to timely, acceptable and affordable healthcare of appropriate quality and to address the social determinants of health<sup>138</sup> for all (OHCHR, 2008).<sup>139</sup> Health and social policies have to prioritise those most marginalised in society without discrimination on the grounds of race, age, ethnicity, or any other status (WHO, 2017)<sup>140</sup> Failing to do so will lead to worsening health problems which can culminate in complications that are complex and costly to treat in the long term. Action, therefore, needs to be taken across all levels of society, not only to reduce inequalities in health but also to improve the health of the whole population.<sup>141</sup>

The financial benefits of providing specialised mental health support (along with other measures such as expedited asylum processing, English language, and employment support) will outweigh the costs to the state by the third year.<sup>142</sup>





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Above: Commissioners Hanna Kienzler and Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani gardening with clients at Maryhill Integration Project.

## 16.2. Practicalities

Health and mental health support must cater to the specific needs of diverse refugees and asylum seekers by being accessible, acceptable, person-centred, and preventive and delivered by a strong healthcare workforce. It must be delivered according to the following principles:

- a. **Access:** Refugees and asylum seekers should receive support to access and benefit from existing health and mental health services on an equal basis with others. This includes:
  - Training for all frontline staff to ensure familiarity with rights of refugees and asylum seekers and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, age, gender, ethnicity or any other factor;
  - Accessibility and, where necessary, funding for public transport to reach health and mental health clinics;
  - Affordability of specialist as well as primary and emergency care;
  - Access to information (e.g., provision of print and audio health system navigation packs upon arrival, health system navigation courses in local communities, and health system navigation buddies) available in relevant languages (see recommendation 14).
- b. **Acceptability:** Health and mental health care should be acceptable to and appropriate for all refugees and asylum seekers. This includes:
  - respect for the principles of medical ethics (i.e., respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice);
  - cultural awareness – with training and performance monitoring for staff and volunteers;
  - employment of sufficient translators and cultural mediators to ensure timely and quality health, and particularly mental health, care;
  - sensitivity to age and gender.
- c. **Person-centred:** Health and mental health care should be person-centred with specific sensitivities to groups with intersecting needs (e.g., women, LGBTQI+ groups, minors, victims of torture, etc.). This includes:
  - Ensuring that refugees' and asylum seekers' preferences, needs, and values guide clinical decisions;
  - Provision of care that is respectful of and responsive to individual preferences, needs, and values;
  - Trauma-informed practice with appropriate training and performance monitoring for staff and volunteers to enable them to identify and respond appropriately to trauma, torture, and trafficking.

- d. **Prevention:** Health and mental health care should be prevention-focussed and address the Social Determinants of Health (e.g., social inclusion and non-discrimination, housing, food security, education, working life conditions, income and social protection) through social prescribing delivered in close collaboration with civil society organisations and with a focus on making and monitoring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>143</sup>
- e. **Strengthening the health care workforce:** A structural support programme should be developed and implemented to enable refugee and asylum seeker healthcare professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, support workers) to utilise their skills and expertise in the UK (see recommendation 10). They should be supported to enter local clinical practice, and maintain and develop their skills and receive suitable additional training and sponsorship to re-qualify where needed on a no-cost basis.

*Below: Panellists at the London Hearing.*



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### 16.3. Key Supporting Evidence

1. A closer collaboration between the NHS and relevant civil society organisations will be beneficial to the health of diverse refugees and asylum seekers. Civil society organisations have been shown to have close connections with the target population that the public sector wants to reach. They have a good understanding of the needs of potential service users and communities. They can therefore deliver outcomes that the public sector finds difficult to deliver on, and are often more
  - b. The NHS Inclusion Health framework supports the planning, development and improvement of health services to meet the needs of people in inclusion health groups. Inclusion health groups refer to people who are socially excluded and typically experience multiple interacting risk factors for poor health, such as stigma, discrimination, poverty, violence, and complex trauma (vulnerable migrants and refugees are explicitly mentioned).<sup>147</sup>

**Evidence collected by the Commission highlights the importance of providing training to frontline staff and health professionals. Such training will help them to ensure refugees and asylum seekers have access to timely and appropriate healthcare; access to proficient interpreters to ensure medical encounters are meaningful; ensuring health providers receive training in cultural competence and cultural awareness to better understand how cultural and religious backgrounds affect health seeking and provision of healthcare.**

innovative when it comes to developing solutions (National Audit Office).<sup>144</sup> However, evidence from the Commission also highlights that collaboration between the NHS and civil society needs to be improved.

2. The LSE economic model shows that when adding specialised mental health support, there is a net reduction in the costs of mental health services, reducing overall costs and providing a net benefit of £1.3 billion by the end of year five.<sup>145</sup>
3. Instead of developing new structures and services, the recommendation builds on existing initiatives that are aimed at improving health and addressing health inequalities in the wider society. These include:
  - a. The Department of Health's commissioned Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) toolkit. This proposes a process by which local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups assess the current and future health, care, and wellbeing needs of the local community to inform local decision-making.<sup>146</sup>
  - c. The mandatory NHS England "Patient and carer race equality framework" (PCREF) which aims to counter discrimination in healthcare by supporting trusts and providers to become "actively anti-racist organisations by ensuring that they are responsible for co-producing and implementing concrete actions to reduce racial inequalities within their services".<sup>148</sup>
4. Evidence collected by the Commission highlights the importance of providing training to frontline staff and health professionals. Such training will help them to ensure refugees and asylum seekers have access to timely and appropriate healthcare; access to proficient interpreters to ensure medical encounters are meaningful; ensuring health providers receive training in cultural competence and cultural awareness to better understand how cultural and religious backgrounds affect health seeking and provision of healthcare.<sup>149</sup>
5. The Commission has also found that refugees and asylum seekers often lack the financial means to pay for public transport or other means of transportation to reach health services. This is particularly challenging for those placed outside urban centres.

6. Following a rights-based approach requires meaningful participation of service users and their families, civil society, and other national stakeholders in the assessment, analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of health and mental health care.<sup>150</sup>
7. The Commission heard evidence from multiple streams regarding barriers to healthcare access. Language barriers were highlighted as a) hindering access to healthcare services, and b) increasing social isolation, (thereby exacerbating mental health difficulties). Evidence also shows a lack of access to proficient interpreters. For example, in the Newcastle Local Hearing, physicians and healthcare workers highlighted a lack of quality amongst interpreters coming from private companies.
8. Evidence offered at Local Hearings, public sector and third sector actors and doctors highlighted cultural barriers to accessing healthcare services, such as not understanding how the NHS works, a hesitancy to seek professional healthcare, or lack of access to past medical records. Notably, in those same hearings, refugees and asylum seekers (more than other respondents) pointed out these barriers operated in both directions: a lack of understanding of individuals' cultural and religious backgrounds limited effective healthcare service provision. Evidence from the Good Faith Partnership submitted to the Commission at the local hearing in Newcastle indicates that GPs are not aware that individuals do not need to be ordinarily resident in the UK to register, which presents a further barrier to healthcare access. In a 2023 report, Doctors of the World highlighted issues around barriers to healthcare access across the UK, most notably for people with insecure immigration status.<sup>151</sup>
9. Civil society actors and refugees and asylum seekers at the Local Hearings and Call for Evidence testified to the gaps in access to healthcare services outside of urban areas, particularly for refugees and asylum seekers facing language barriers. Some third sector workers suggested this may lead to increased rates of migration to larger cities. For instance, refugees at the Cardiff Local Hearing reported that a lack of local healthcare and support services for LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers and refugees has led some to move to larger cities where more resources may be available.
10. Responses to the Call for Evidence also reported that lack of cultural understanding amongst some healthcare staff presents a further barrier to access. For example, the New Scots Integration Strategy indicates that facing discrimination and discriminatory attitudes negatively impacts mental wellbeing for refugees and asylum seekers accessing healthcare services.<sup>152</sup> Evidence from the International Comparisons report suggests that some of these challenges may be mitigated by improving providers' awareness of linguistic and cultural capacities, inclusive services, interpreter availability through establishing websites or dedicated services, and offering trainings to providers.<sup>153</sup>

11. Relocation and dispersal within the asylum system pose challenges to accessing healthcare services (see recommendation 6). The Commission heard evidence from multiple sources that being relocated means that families may lose access to services or face repeated challenges to access services in their new locations. This was cited as an issue for accessing even basic services, such as registration with a GP (or even repeatedly re-registering in order to access health services after being relocated to new accommodation). Doctors and healthcare workers in Newcastle especially noted that the NHS is unable to effectively assess individuals who are often relocated to different areas.
12. A lack of communication and coordination across the Home Office, various third and public sector actors, healthcare providers, and others supporting refugee and asylum seeker access to healthcare frequently leads to gaps in access and ineffective coverage. For instance, physicians and other care providers are not informed that patients are moving, leading to a lag in connecting individuals with local healthcare services. This leads to lapses in patient care and exacerbates existing barriers to accessing health provisions.

**Physicians and other care providers are not informed that patients are moving, leading to a lag in connecting individuals with local healthcare services. This leads to lapses in patient care and exacerbates existing barriers to accessing health provisions.**

*Below: Commissioners, clients, and staff meeting at Maryhill Integration Project.*



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# Next Steps

The Commission on the Integration of Refugees remains committed to creating an effective, fair, and humane asylum system in the UK for the benefit of all. We have undertaken the most thorough review of the asylum system in a generation, including gathering a vast amount of evidence on the current state of integration in the UK. The recommendations set out in this report are evidence-based, economically costed, and practical. If implemented, they would bring significant longer-term social and economic benefits to the whole country.

Under the leadership of Dr Ed Kessler and the Woolf Institute, the Commission will continue to strive to see our recommendations brought to fruition in the coming months and years, through imaginative thinking and with a focus on medium and long-term solutions in the following spheres:

## **Asylum Processing**

Ensuring that refugee and asylum applications are processed more efficiently and sensitively, in a setting in which integration with the host community is an imperative.

## **Policy**

Assess and review changes of policy by the government and all political parties, to ensure the implementation of the detailed recommendations of this report set out in the Executive Summary.

## **Public Spending**

Ensuring that value for public money, demonstrated in the report, is reflected in the delivery of the new policies.

## **International Cooperation**

The Commission is committed to seeking greater international cooperation in refugee management, to ensure that responsibility is shared by countries faced with the current level of mobility of populations. The UK has an opportunity to show itself as a global leader in this respect.

## **Public Discourse**

De-toxifying the political discussion of refugee issues so that they are resolved by reviewing the evidence and through merits-based decision making.





*Women taking part in a craft activity at Brushstrokes Community Project.*

# Biographies of Commissioners

The Commissioners of the Commission on the Integration of Refugees are:

**Trixie Brenninkmeijer (Steering Group)** was until recently the Chair of the Board of trustees of the Arise Foundation, an anti-slavery and anti-human trafficking organisation, and former Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Woolf Institute. Trixie has been involved in many charities, including Driving for Meals on Wheels. She was chair of her parish council; board member of the Helen Bamber Foundation supporting AMREF; and lately, has been involved in combatting human trafficking, especially through promoting the long-term care of trafficked women and girls from the sex industry.

**Jacqueline Broadhead** is the Co-Director of the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. Established in 2003, COMPAS is a multi-disciplinary migration research centre with a broad portfolio of research, knowledge exchange, and teaching across the full spectrum of migration studies. Jacqui's own work focuses on local government and integration, including leading "Inclusive Cities" – a network of 12 UK cities focused on improving integration outcomes. Jacqui previously worked in local government – leading one of the first programmes to accept refugees through the Syrian VPRS Scheme in 2015. She is a trustee of Justice Together Initiative, aiming to improve access to immigration advice.

**Lord Alex Carlile** CBE KC is a former MP and a Cross Bench member of the House of Lords. He is a founding director of SC Strategy Ltd, a strategy and public policy consultancy. From 2001 to 2011 he was the UK Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation. He is an expert on terrorism and extremism issues. He is a Fellow of King's College London, and holds Honorary Doctorates from several universities. He is President of the Royal Medical Foundation of Epsom College. He was a co-founder of the Welsh charity Rekindle and chairman of Design for Homes. He speaks regularly in the House of Lords on a wide range of issues, including migration and asylum.

**Bishop Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani** is the Bishop of Chelmsford and the Church of England's lead Bishop for Housing. She previously served as the first Bishop of Loughborough in the Diocese of Leicester from 2017 to 2021. Guli arrived in this country as a refugee from Iran, aged 14. She was educated at Nottingham and Bristol Universities, training for ministry at The South East Institute for Theological Education. Ordained priest in 1999, Guli served her title in the Diocese of Southwark. She has a doctorate in theology on cross cultural mission and is a contributor on Radio Four's *Thought for the Day*.

**Carolyn Downs** was Chief Executive of the London Borough of Brent, from 2015 to 2023. Prior to this, Carolyn was Chief Executive at the Local Government Association and had also previously served as Chief Executive of the Legal Services Commission, Deputy Permanent Secretary and Director General at the Ministry of Justice, and Chief Executive of Shropshire County Council. She led on both Asylum and Refugees and Crime and Policing for London Chief Executives. She is now an NHS Non-Executive, a member of the London Policing Board, and an advisor to the States of Jersey Health and Community Services Board.

**David Goodhart** is a journalist, author and think tanker. He is currently head of the demography unit at the Policy Exchange think tank. He is the founder and former editor of Prospect magazine and the former Director of the centre-left think tank Demos. His 2013 book *The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-War Immigration* was runner up for the Orwell book prize. In his book published in 2017 (a Sunday Times bestseller) *The Road to Somewhere: The New Tribes Shaping British Politics*, David identified the value divisions in British society that help to explain the Brexit vote and the rise of populism. His latest book, *Head, Hand, Heart: The Struggle for Dignity and Status in the 21st Century*, argues that many of the modern world's troubles arise from allocating too much reward and status to just one form of human aptitude: cognitive ability.

**Baroness Brenda Hale** retired as President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in January 2020, after a varied career as an academic, law reformer and judge (where she heard many cases involving refugees and asylum seekers). She now devotes her time to writing, speaking and good causes. She is a member of the House of Lords, holds a number of visiting and honorary academic appointments and is a Trustee of the Woolf Institute.

**Kevin Hyland** was a police officer for 30 years and leader of London's Human Trafficking Unit. In 2014, he was appointed the UK's first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. In 2018, he was elected Ireland's representative to the Council of Europe Independent Group of Experts for Trafficking. He was instrumental in establishing and remains chief advisor to the Santa Marta Group, a high-level partnership between law enforcement agencies, faith groups, and civil society launched by Pope Francis at the Vatican.

**Ben Jackson (Steering Group only)** is Director of the Asylum Reform Initiative, the team which also supports the Together With Refugees coalition. He has been CEO of the international development network Bond, UK Director of Crisis Action, Director of Campaigns for Shelter, Director of Action for Southern Africa (the successor to the Anti-Apartheid Movement) and has worked at the Home Office. With Harriet Lamb, he is the author of *From Anger to Action: Inside the Global Movements for Social Justice, Peace and a Sustainable Planet* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

**Dame Diana Johnson** DBE MP was elected as the Labour Member of Parliament for Kingston Upon Hull North and the city's first female MP in 2005. Diana became Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee in December 2021 and, due to this position, is also a member of the Liaison Committee and the Joint Committee on National Security Strategy. Diana was named Backbencher of the Year in 2018 for her work to secure a Public Inquiry into the NHS contaminated blood scandal. In the 2020 New Year's Honours, Diana was appointed as a Dame Commander for her charitable and political work

**Professor Cornelius Katona (Steering Group Chair)** is Honorary Medical and Research Director of the Helen Bamber Foundation, a human rights charity working with asylum seekers and refugees. He is also a Professor in the Division of Psychiatry at University College London. He is the Royal College of Psychiatrists' lead on Refugee and Asylum Mental Health and was a member of the Committee that updated NICE guidelines on PTSD. He has published more than 300 papers and written/edited 16 books. In 2019, he was awarded the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Honorary Fellowship, the College's highest honour.

**Dr Ed Kessler (Commission Chair)** is Founder President of the Woolf Institute, Fellow of St Edmund's College, Cambridge, and a leading thinker in interfaith relations, primarily Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations. He founded the Woolf Institute in 1998 and has written 12 books and dozens of articles on interfaith relations. Ed was described by *The Times Higher Education Supplement* as "probably the most prolific interfaith figure in British academia" and was awarded an MBE for services to interfaith relations in 2011. He regularly appears in the media commenting on religion and belief issues of the day.

**Professor Hanna Kienzler (Steering Group)** is Professor of Global Health in the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine and Co-Director of the ESRC Centre for Society and Mental Health at King's College London. As an anthropologist, she investigates how systemic violence, ethnic conflict, and complex emergencies intersect with health and mental health outcomes in the occupied Palestinian territories, Kosovo, and, among refugees in the UK. She conducts research on the mental health impacts of war and trauma on survivors; on what it means for persons with severe mental illness to live and participate in their respective communities; and on humanitarian and mental health interventions in fragile states. She is also co-founder of the Refugee Mental Health & Place network. Methodologically, her work combines ethnography with a range of other qualitative methods, participatory action approaches, and arts-based techniques.

**Janice Lopatkin** is UK Programme Director of World Jewish Relief. She established the refugee Specialist Training and Employment Programme in 2016, which now provides refugee employment support across England and she is the chair of Trustees of the Refugee Employment Network (REN), which aims to strengthen employment support services for refugees in the UK.

**Jehangir Malik** is Director of Policy and Engagement at Mercy Mission UK. Previously, he held leadership positions at Muslim Aid, Islamic Relief UK, and at VCSEP within British Red Cross. He has held various civil society leadership roles in faith-based organisations leading on public policy, engagement, strategy and governance, humanitarian response strategies, equality, diversity, and inclusion and worked with minority communities in supporting funding and social impact. Jehangir has served as a trustee on various boards including National Emergency Trust, Chair of Equality Steering Group, Association of Chief Executives for Voluntary Organisations, Runnymede Trust, The Feast and Muslim Charities Forum.

**Bishop Paul McAleenan** was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and Titular Bishop of Mercia in 2016. He has particular pastoral responsibility for Hertfordshire. Bishop Paul is Chair of the Caritas Board in the diocese and has oversight of all matters concerning Ethnic Chaplaincies, Hospital and Prison Chaplaincies, and the work of the Permanent Diaconate. In the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Bishop McAleenan is Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees and Racial Justice issues.

**Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger** is a cross bench Peer, Chair of University College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, and Chair of The Whittington Hospital NHS Trust. She is a Trustee of the Rayne Foundation, Chair of Independent Age, and is a Commissioner on the UK Commission on Bereavement. She was Senior Rabbi of West London Synagogue from 2011 until March 2020, where she is now Rabbi Emerita. Baroness Neuberger is also Chair of Walter and Liesel Schwab Charitable Trust set up in memory of her parents, to help refugees and asylum seekers access education.

**Professor Jenny Phillimore** FAcSS is Professor of Migration and Superdiversity and a leading scholar in refugee integration, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), and forced migration, superdiversity, and access to social welfare. Jenny is also an expert on Community Sponsorship. She manages teams of researchers focusing on refugees' access to SGBV, health, education, employment, training, and housing, with a particular focus on integration in the UK and EU. She has advised policymakers in all continents and was a co-author of the UK's Indicators of Integration for refugees.

**Mishka Pillay (Steering Group)** is a campaigner and advocate with a focus on refugee rights and immigration detention in the UK. He is a co-founder of A&M Consultancy, which is a venture of two consultants with first-hand experience of the UK's asylum and immigration system. He has a particular focus on lived experience leadership and co-production and meaningful involvement of people with lived experience. Mishka is a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Working Group for Mental Health and Forced Migration and is also a trustee of Freedom from Torture.

**David Simmonds MP** was elected Conservative MP for Ruislip, Northwood, and Pinner in December 2019. He has been active in local politics in the constituency as Deputy Leader of Hillingdon Council since 2002. He has led on education and children's services. His national work has included leading the Conservatives at the Local Government Association, chairing the LGA Children and Young People Board from 2011 to 2015, and the Improvement and Innovation Board 2015 to 2016. As Chairman of the Asylum and Refugee Task Group, he led the political work with the government developing the Syrian resettlement programme, and the National Transfer Scheme to support refugee children.

**Enver Solomon** joined the Refugee Council as Chief Executive in December 2020, following nearly three years as CEO of Just for Kids Law, a charity providing youth support and legal representation to children and young people facing adversity. Enver is proud to be the first CEO in the organisation's 70 year history who is from a black and minority ethnic background. He was named Charity CEO of the year at the Charity Times Awards 2023. He holds a wealth of experience in the charitable sector, including senior roles at the National Children's Bureau, The Children's Society, Barnardo's, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, and the Prison Reform Trust. Prior to working in the voluntary sector he was a BBC journalist for ten years.

**Nicola Thomas (Steering Group)** is Diocesan Secretary (Chief Executive) of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark. Before this, she was a civil servant for 20 years, mostly in the area of asylum and immigration. Her most recent civil service role was Deputy Director of Refugee Integration and Vulnerability at the Home Office where (with her job-share partner) she led the team that created the Community Sponsorship Scheme for resettled refugees.

**Sabir Zazai** has been CEO of Scottish Refugee Council since 2017 and was previously CEO of Coventry Migrant Centre. Sabir arrived in the UK from Afghanistan in 1999, and his work draws from his own experiences and expertise in community integration and cohesion and refugee rights. Sabir graduated from Coventry University with a Master's in Community Cohesion Management and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Glasgow and the Lord Provost award for human rights. Sabir is Honorary President of City of Sanctuary and a Visiting Practice Fellow at the Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations at Coventry University. Sabir currently chairs the Asylum Reform Initiative, and Together with Refugees movement. In 2022, Sabir was awarded Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and also received an OBE.

## Acknowledgements

The Commission on the Integration of Refugees wishes to thank all those who have contributed to this report, both individuals and organisations, listed below. Many have preferred to remain anonymous.

Thank you to members of the Steering Group of the Commission – Prof Cornelius Katona (Chair), Trixie Brenninkmeijer, Lord Alex Carlile, Dr Chris Cooper-Davies (Head of Secretariat 2022-23), Dr Emanuelle Degli Esposti (Head of Secretariat 2023-24 and lead author of this report), Hannah Fox, Ben Jackson, Prof Hanna Kienzler, Mishka Pillay, and Nicola Thomas – and also to the organisations who produced the supplementary reports (Asylum Reform Initiatives 1997-2022, Call for Evidence, Economic Analysis, International Comparisons, Local Hearings, and the Qualitative Survey), which provide detailed information as well as evidence for the Commission’s findings: the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre (CPEC) at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the Good Faith Partnership (GFP), and Neighbourly Lab.

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Finally, special thanks to the Woolf Institute, which convened and generously funded the Commission.

## Individuals

Ibrahim Abdallah	Christina Alternberg	Matt Baggot
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Muhammed Abdullah	Mohamed Al Twaish	Sharon Baker
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Safwan Adam	Ammouna Ali	Aleksandra Bardon
Debbie Adler	Deta Almond	Peter Barnett
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Nayeer Afzal	Lord David Alton	Igor Bartkiv
Bushra Ahmadi	Fahad Alzaabi	Alan Bayes
Nasrin Ahmadi	Jim Andrews	Jeff Beatty
Charlotte Ahmed	Jennifer Ang	Yasmin Begum
Nasrin Ahmed	Aderonke Apata	Yonas Bereket
Qaseem Ahmed	Elizabeth Archibald	Alex Beffs
Qasim Ahmed	Phil Arnold	Regine Bews
Rawand Ahmed	Fatima Arshad	Qurratulain Mohammed Bilal
Susan Aitken	Shahin Ashraf	Emma Birks
Maimuna Ajawo	Inspector James Ashton	Lord David Blunkett
Pinar Aksu	Emma Austin	Úna Boyd
Jill Alindayu	Nian Baban	Woodren Brade
Ahmad Al Mohammad	Dan Bacall	Keith Bradley

Nina Bridges	Assayed Dawood	Rachel Gibbs
Andy Brittain	Betty Demisse	Peter Gibson MP
Shari Brown	Judith Dennis	Sabah Gilani
The Revd Canon Dean Sarah Brown	Shena Deuchars	Dorothy Goodliff
Eliza Browning	Brian Dikoff	Ann Goodridge
Siobhan Bryant	Ana Di Mascio	Mark Goodridge
Julia Buchanan	Alistair Dinnie	Satvinder Kaur Goraya
Roy Burley	Sophie Davies	Linda Gray
Sally Burlington	Lyndsay Donaldson	Kate Green
Sandra Burton	Kamena Dorling	Margaret Gregg
Bishop Paul Butler	Rosie Edser	Hannah Gregory
Marina Carnwarth	Aled Edwards	Dominic Grieve
Sophie Cartwright	Israel Eguaojie	Lizzy Gribble
Geraldine Chacon V	George Eldridge	Elizabeth Griffith
Lucia Chaplin	Ahmed Elkhalfa	David Griffiths
Janet Chapman	Hessy Elliott	Catherine Griffiths
Mohammad Charif Ismail	Leon Elliott	Laura Griffiths
Jennie Charman	Safieh Eskandar	Miurel Gutierrez
Steve Charman	Margaret Evans	Imam Asim Hafiz
Anthony Cheng	Mikki Evue	Seana Hamil
Sin Yi Cheung	Karin Eyben	Naomi Hamill
Rachel Chiu	Kam Fai	Sohail Hanif
Matthew Chow	Areeg Fareh	Seltene Hans
Gary Christie	Tim Farron MP	Christian Harkensee
Yusuf Ciftci	Jonathan Featonby	Jackson Harms
Rosalyn Clare	Gayle Findlay	Lord Richard Harrington
Rev Jonathan Clarke	Dan Fisher	Azad Hasan
Amy Clarke	Paul FitzPatrick	David Haslam
Teresa Clarke	Isla Flood	Mustafa Hatipoglu
Frank Cole	Rowenna Foggie	Jude Hawes
Chris Cooper Davies	Isobelle Ford	Abeil Hedgu
Josephine Copeland	Ruth Forecast	Rebecca Herbert
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Jenny Corbett	Linda Fox	Alice Herve
Siobhan Coskeran	Charlie Fraser	Helen Hibberd
Fiona Costello	King Fu Chau	Liz Hibberd
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Harriet Crabtree	Louise Gannon	Wissam Hirmiz
Hayley Crane	Siobhan Garrigan	Barbara Hodge MP
Chloe Crowther	Alejandro Gavidia	Sharon Hodgeson MP
Alan Cutting	Joe Geaney	Mark Holland
Marina Davidson	Shewit Tsehay Gebrehiwet	Caroline Homan
Shelley Davies	Fae Gerlach	Andy Hoole
Albert Davies-Smith	Iona Gibbons	Maria Houlihan

## Individuals

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Marsela Hoxha  
Anne Hubbard  
Kathy-Blake Birch Hudson  
Mark Hui  
Ann Humes  
Anita Hurrell  
Clare Hurst  
Fiona Hutton  
Lord Raymond Hylton  
Gbmike Ibitoye  
Nahla Ibrahim  
Colin Iddles  
Atif Imtiaz  
Nataliia Inshyna  
Bindu Isaac  
Mohammad Issa  
Igor Ivancic  
Neil Jameson  
Maimuna Jawo  
Fatou Jinadu  
Anna Jones  
Heledd Jones  
Katie Jones  
Rachel Jones  
Sarah Jones  
Rebecca Joy  
Alphonsine Kabagabo  
Chun Kai Ma  
Heena Khaled  
Mohammad Kanu  
Elizabeth Kardynal  
Muhanad Karzon  
Julie Kashirahamwe  
Inderjit Kaur  
Karzan Kawani  
Owais Khan  
Sara Khan  
Wassim Khmaja  
Stephen Kinnock MP  
Antony Konga Kimani  
Francesca Klug  
Martin Knapp  
Bose Kokumo  
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Mohammed Kozbar  
Cheng Lai Hung  
Jen Laws  
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Elizabeth Leeming  
Tom Leimdorfer  
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Rosa Lewis  
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Helen Liebling  
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Bishop Rosemarie Mallett  
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Kathy Margerison  
Iman Maygi  
Tandrima Mazumdar  
Wanjiku Mbugua-Ngotho  
Aidan McAtominey  
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Carl McCann  
Hermione McEwen  
Misan McFarland  
Billy McKenzie  
Pip McKnight  
Jackie McLoughlin  
Michael McLoughlin  
Jonathan McNaught  
Grant McPhail  
Hannah McSherry  
Olga Medvedieva  
Paulette Mengjo  
Jonah Mesgarnezhad  
Louis Messi  
Brian Miller  
Emily Mills  
Claire Milne  
Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis  
Sally Mitchison  
Ethel Mkandawire  
Fatima Mohamed  
Reem Mohamed  
Nur Mohammed  
Maja Moller  
Tamlyn Monson  
Bethan Morgan  
Chris Morgan  
Lucy Morris  
Marley Morris  
Canan Mortimer  
Nadir Mothojakan  
Zahra Motjaba  
Themba Moyo  
Jeffreys Muguti  
Uzma Mukhtar  
Fahira Mulamehic  
Nimco Mumin  
Ahmad Murad  
Rebecca Murray  
Agrena Mushonga  
Mohamed Mustafa  
Sara Muzaffar  
Alexandra Mylrea Lowndes  
Zafer Nahhas  
David Newall  
Cardinal Vincent Nichols  
Paul Noonan  
Bakhtiar Nori  
Choman Nori  
Angella Masangalale Nyirenda  
Barry O'Leary  
Lynette O'Leary  
Graham O'Neil  
Vivien Opiolka  
Austin Oshegbu  
Adele Owen  
Claudia Paliais  
Lara Parizotto  
Preeti Pasricha



Eleanor Paton	Rudy Schulkind	Jeremy Thompson
Jonny Patterson	Sharmin Shajahan	Cressida Thomson
Emma Pearson	Abbas Baig Shari	Ellie Thorne
Mayor Jason Perry	Rivka Shaw	Vincent Totton
Ilona Pinter	Barnabas Shelbourne	Will Tuladhar-Douglas
Robin Plummer	Patrick Shields	Jenna Turnbull
Louise Porter	Sadia Sikandar	Mohib Ullah
Matt Powell	Nidhita Singh	Adriana Uribe
Stephanie Price	Peter Smedley	Linh Vu
David Primrose	Kerry Smith	Josie Wade
Julian Prior	Tony Smith	Sau Wai Leung
Alina Prokopenko	Penny Smith-Orr	Magda Walbaum
Harriet Protheroe-Soltani	Olena Smolynets	James Walker
Akriti Purohit	Martyn Snow	Kevin Walton
Savan Qadir	Dave Sohanpal	Amelia Washbourne
Chris Quinn	Will Somerville	James Watkins
Emad Raad	Carol Squire	Stephanie Wauthier Albrand
Abbas Radaideh	Belinda Stanley	Maria Weigt-Bienzle
Mohitor Rahma	Maggie Stevenson	Susanne Wessendorf
Habib Rahman	Ben Still	Andrew West
Saba Rai	Hugo Storey	Ann Marie White
Yvonne Rendell	Lesley Storey	Stephanie White
Gisela Renolds	Diane Strate	Marieke Widmann
Penny Richards	Mary Stretch	Oleksandra Wierzbicka
Katherine Richards-Bryant	Baroness Phillipa Stroud	Lucy Wilkins
Suraiya Riyaz	Allison Summers	Erica Williams
Stefan Robert	Asumani Susho	John Willott
Sam Roberts	Georgina Sword-Daniels	Mimi-Jane Wilsher
Heather Rolfe	Ronald Tagwireyi	Germein Wong
Niamh Rowan	Maryam Taher	Simon Woodman
Ben Ryan	Mariam Tahir	Lord Harry Woolf
Ramatoulie Saidykhan	Ania Tajsiak	Adam Yasir
Rev Nick Sagovsky	Christine Elvira Maoumbe Takougang	Miranda Yeung
Ahmed Salam	Abdullah Tamo	Iyad Yousef
Mehdi Salami	Chloe Tang	Rizwan Yusooif
Alan Sarwin Ahmed Salim	Eric Tang	Jimmy Zachariah
Maddy Salisbury	Joanna Tarach	John Zavos
Clare Sandercock	Yeukai Taruvinga	Fahim Zazai
Tariq Sanousi	Adele Taylor	Sabir Zazai
Nihad Sarmini	Ben Taylor	Rabbi Igor Zinkov
Fatima Satuof	Laura Taylor	
Khaled Satuof	Owen Temple	
Alexander Saul	Sarah Teather	
Julie Savage	Richard Thickpenny	

### Organisations

A Growing City (Newcastle Council)  
Aberlour Scotland's Children's  
Charity and Guardianship Scotland  
Action Foundation  
Active Horizons  
Adult Education Service - ESOL  
Advice NI  
Advisor to Bishop of Croydon  
African Rainbow Family  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community  
All Saints School Croydon  
All4One  
Amna  
Amnesty International  
Ashley Community Housing  
Aspen  
Asylum Matters  
Barnado's  
Bath Welcomes Refugees  
Befriender  
Belfast City of Sanctuary  
Ben & Jerry's  
Birmingham City Council  
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church  
Bradford African Community (BAC)  
Breaking Barriers  
Bridges Programmes  
British Future  
British Red Cross  
British Sri Lankan Community  
Bromsgrove and Redditch  
Welcomes  
Brushstrokes, Sandwell  
CALAIS LIGHT  
Cambridge Refugee Resettlement  
Campaign  
Cardiff University  
Cardinal Hume Centre  
Caritas Salford  
Caritas Westminster  
Carlisle Cathedral, Church of  
England  
Catholic Bishops Conference of  
England and Wales  
Caton Methodist Church  
Central Baptist  
Central England Law Centre  
Children's Services Directorate,  
Salford Council  
Children's Society  
Christ Church  
Church of the Nazarene  
Churches Together in Wales  
Citizens Advice, Staffordshire  
Citizens UK  
City of Edinburgh Council  
Coffee with Kids  
Common Projects  
Convention of Scottish Local  
Authorities (COSLA)  
Coventry University  
Coventry City Council  
Coventry Refugee and Migrant  
Centre  
Cranhill Development Trust  
Creative Minds  
Croeso Menai  
Crown Terrace Baptist Church 2022  
Croydon Adult Learning and  
Training (CALAT)  
Croydon Council  
Croydon Gurdwara  
Croydon Interfaith Forum  
Croydon Mosque and Islamic  
Centre  
Croydon Police  
Croydon Refugee Day Centre  
Croydon Refugee and New  
Communities Forum  
Croydon Voluntary Action  
Darlington Assistance for Refugees  
Dean of Hereford  
Devon County Council  
Diocese of Southwark  
Doctors of the World UK  
Doncaster Conversation Club  
Dudley MBC  
Edelman  
Equality Commission  
Esk and Wear Valleys NHS  
Foundation Trust  
European Council on Refugees  
and Exiles  
European Welfare Association  
Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees  
Extem  
Freedom from Torture  
FWT- A Centre for Women  
GARAS  
Gateshead Council  
Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group  
Glasgow City Council  
Glitter Cymru  
Global Link  
Good Faith Partnership  
Grampian Regional Equality  
Council  
Greater Manchester Combined  
Authority  
Greater Manchester Immigration  
Aid Unit  
Helen Bamber Foundation  
Herefordshire City of Sanctuary  
Herefordshire Council  
HIAS-JCORE  
Hikmat Devon CIC  
Hope Not Hate  
Horn of Africa People's Aid  
International Rescue Committee  
IPPR  
J&P  
Jesuit Refugee Service  
Jet North  
Just Right Scotland  
Justice and Peace Refugee Project  
King's College London  
Labour MP for East Ham  
Labour, Birmingham City Council  
Lancashire Council  
Lancashire County Council  
Law Society  
Leeds Beckett University  
Legacy Youth Zone  
Lichfield Cathedral  
Liverpool City Council



Local Government Association	Office of the Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogues of Great Britain and the Commonwealth	Student Action for Refugees (STAR)
London Borough of Hounslow	Open Door North East	Sunderland City of Sanctuary
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Peace of Mind	Talent Beyond Boundaries
London Councils	RAMP	The Baca Charity
London School of Economics and Political Science	Reach Children's Hub	The Children's Society
London South Bank University	Red Cross	The Eritrean community in Swansea
Lord Bishop of Leicester	Refuaid	The New Penny Ltd.
Louth Churches for Refugees	Refugee and Migrant Centre	The Salvation Army Gateshead
Lowering the Bar CIC	English Refugee Council	These Walls Must Fall
Malvern Welcomes	Scottish Refugee Council	Together for Ipswich
Manchester City Council	Refugee Education Network	TortureID
Manchester City of Sanctuary	Refugee Sponsorship Circle	Tyneside Welcomes
Manchester Local Care Organisation	Refugee Welcome Homes	Unbound Philanthropy
Manchester Refugee Support Network	Refugees for Justice	UNHCR
Maryhill Integration Network	Regional Refugee Forum NorthEast	UNHCR - Jordan
Micro Rainbow	Restore	United Synagogue
Migrant English Support Hub (MESH)	Robert Owen Society	University of Glasgow
Migrant Health	Rohingya Action North East	University of Leicester
Migrant Help	Rossendale Refugee Support Group	University of Oxford
Migrants Organise	Safe Passage	University of Sanctuary Coordinator
Migration Policy and Practice	Salford City College	VOICES Network
Migration Yorkshire	Salford Public Health	Walking with Centre
National Theatre Wales; Glitter Cymru	SC Strategy	Walsall MBC
Neighbourly Lab	Scottish Government	Walsall's Afghan Community Group
New River Baptist Church	Scottish Refugee Council	Warwick University
Newcastle City Council	SOAS	Welsh Government
Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals Foundation Trust	Social Enterprise Ideas Development	Welsh Refugee Coalition
NHS	Solihull college	Welsh Refugee Council
NHS England	Somewhere Else in Stockton	Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB	Southwark Council	West End Refugee Service
NI Children and Young People	Spring Housing Association	West Mercia Police
NIHRC	St Albans Cathedral	West Midland Strategic Migration Partnership
No To Hassockfield Campaign Group	St Gabriel's Secondary School	West Midlands Combined Authority
North East Law Centre	St Laurence Church	West Sussex County Council
North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership	St Mary's Catholic High School	Wolverhampton Council
Northern Ireland Civil Service	St Matthew Croydon	Women Seeking Asylum Together (WAST) Manchester
	St Thomas Church Lancaster	Women's Support Project
	Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Network	Woolf Institute
	Stonewall Cymru	Your Homes Newcastle
	Strategic Housing Manager, Herefordshire Council	Zubeda Welcome

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