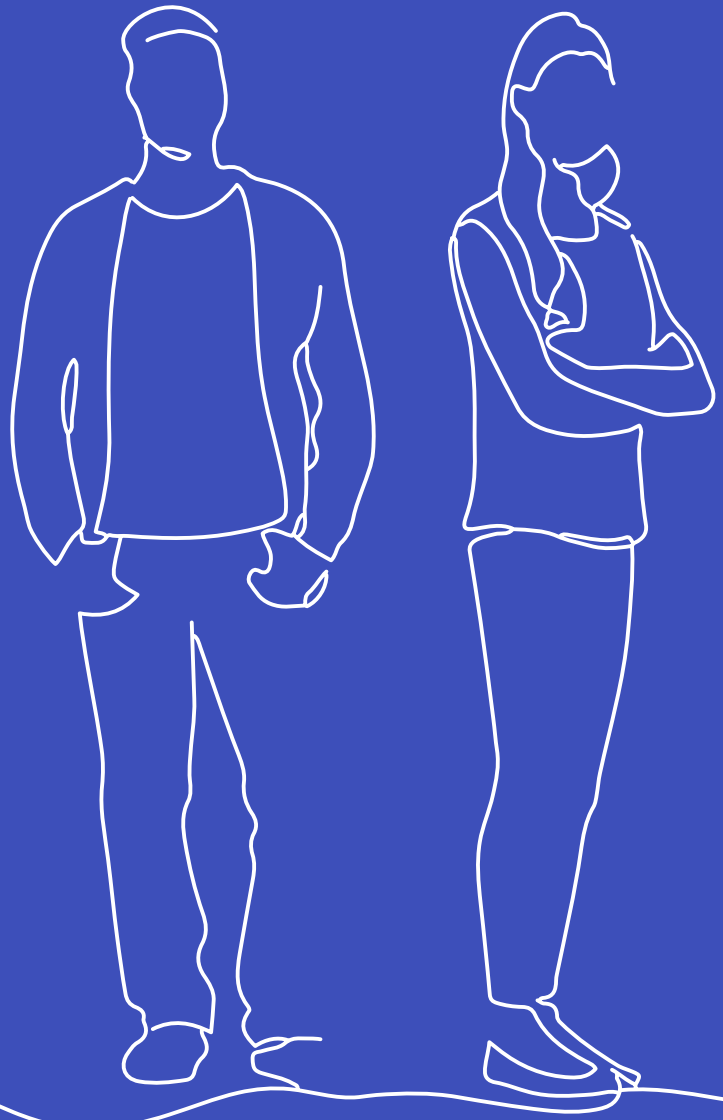




Commission on the
Integration of
Refugees

Call for Evidence:

The Effect of the UK Asylum System
on the Integration of Refugees and
Asylum Seekers



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Introduction

About 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.

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 the heart, and have achieved consensus across the political spectrum.

The Commission commissioned and conducted a series of interrelated research strands. Reports documenting these strands of research are available on the Commission website.

Call for Evidence

Between November 2022 and April 2023, the Commission on the Integration of Refugees disseminated a Call for Evidence that invited respondents to submit evidence on how the current refugee and asylum system affects the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into wider UK society. 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, with the aim of taking in a wide array of evidence to support and inform the recommendations proposed by the Commission.

The questionnaire was structured around four thematic areas that emerged from discussions both within the Commission and through conversations with diverse stakeholders. A full list of questions from the Call for Evidence is available in Annexe A:

- 1. Life in the UK as a Refugee or Asylum Seeker**
- 2. The Refugee and Asylum System**
- 3. Local Integration Support**
- 4. Public Opinion and Politics**

Within each thematic area, questions elicited respondents' personal experiences, observations, and suggestions for solutions about various aspects of the asylum system and integration experiences. Respondents were invited to answer questions in their own words. They were also given space to include any additional information (up to 1,000 words), hyperlinks to relevant reports or research, or other published materials at the end of the questionnaire.

This report offers an overview of the key findings that emerged from the Call for Evidence, grouped under thematic headings, as outlined below. The report reflects the wide range of opinions heard by the commission – these opinions do not always agree, as we would expect in a policy area in which people have differing views and perspectives; rather, the findings here reflect the breadth of evidence that Commissioners used to support and inform their recommendations.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the challenges and solutions described by respondents to the Commission's Call for Evidence reflect complex and pressing problems within the UK's system for asylum seekers and refugees and its impact on integration. Respondents called for improving the current system to ensure the humane and compassionate treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

Responses to the Call for Evidence focused on the potential for systemic change to drive meaningful improvement to the lives of refugees and asylum seekers, enhance mental and physical wellbeing, and promote integration. Numerous respondents noted that, if done well, such consideration would benefit UK society as a whole by addressing shared areas of concern, such as labour shortages and the cost-of-living crisis.

The analysis of responses identified six key themes around which the findings have been structured: (1) governance and the asylum process; (2) accommodation, detention, and dispersal; (3) education and English language provision; (4) employment and entrepreneurship; (5) social inclusion; and (6) health and mental health. Across these themes, there were five key findings that appeared repeatedly and went on to inform the Commission's recommendations. These are:

First, the asylum system itself causes harm to asylum seekers and impedes integration

A majority of respondents indicated that delays in processing asylum applications, as well as the fragmented and siloed nature of the current asylum system negatively impact mental and physical wellbeing, inhibit the creation of meaningful social connections, and impede integration.

Second, the mental health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers is often overlooked.

Lack of transparency and delays within the current asylum system, coupled with negative public discourse, serve to compound the mental health challenges that refugees and asylum seekers may already be facing. This is exacerbated by a lack of tailored mental health provision and trauma-informed care, especially for vulnerable and protected groups.

Third, public discourse around refugees and asylum seekers impacts refugee and asylum seeker integration.

Refugees and asylum seekers reported experiencing hostility, discrimination, and negative bias in public rhetoric, from local residents in areas in which they are settled, and even from service providers and administrators. Responses from refugees and asylum seekers highlighted perceptions that this discourse negatively impacts their sense of belonging, while third sector actors highlighted the ways in which policy, practice, and discourse are linked.

Fourth, English language learning and proficiency is crucial for all aspects of integration.

English proficiency can open access to education, employment, a wider network of social connections, and support access to services such as housing and healthcare. However, structural problems regarding the assessment and provision of English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes, and a shortage of competent interpreters and translators, means that language learning is often delayed or piecemeal.

Fifth, there is a need for improved inter-organisation communication.

Third and public sector actors responding to the Call for Evidence indicated a lack of communication and coordination amongst Home Office actors, local, regional, and national government, and the many various but often disconnected third sector organisations and agencies. This, it was highlighted, might mean that refugees and asylum seekers "fall through the cracks" or fail to receive optimal care and support.

Methodology

The Commission's Call for Evidence inquired into how the current refugee and asylum system affects the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into wider UK society. The Call for Evidence was structured based on four key areas: (1) Life in the UK as a refugee or asylum seeker; (2) the refugee and asylum system; (3) local integration support; and (4) public opinion and politics. Respondents were invited to reflect on these in their own words and were given the opportunity to attach further evidence including links to reports or research and other published materials.

The Commission received a total of 204 responses to its Call for Evidence. Of these, 163 were considered valid responses. 41 responses were discounted as invalid, due to the following reasons:

- 1) Empty response sections submitted
- 2) Responses submitted in a language other than English
- 3) Response section was submitted empty but with attachment e.g. images or publications whose content did not respond to the Call for Evidence questions
- 4) Responses submitted with other attachments e.g., videos or incompatible format (files could not be opened)

Out of 163 valid respondents, 42% were submitted by female and 38% by male participants (including one transgender male respondent); while 20% did not specify their gender. Age distribution extended from teenagers to those in their eighties with 2% in their teens, 11% in their twenties, 13% in their thirties, 14% in their forties, 19% in their fifties, 12% in their sixties, 5% in their seventies, and 2% in their eighties. 22% of respondents did not indicate their age. More than one third identified themselves as refugees or asylum seekers. Amongst the 58 individuals who identified as refugees or asylum seekers, 16 had been granted leave to remain in the UK. There were five respondents who were part of a resettlement programme; while nine identified as Hong Kong

British Nationals (Overseas). Other participants with lived experience indicated that they were refugees who subsequently obtained British citizenship; individuals who arrived in the UK from Vietnam in the late 1970's; people who reunited with their families; those who came to the UK on a spousal visa but self-identify as a refugee due to discrimination against their sexual identity in the home country; and cases in which a group of people with different statuses responded together in a single form. A significant proportion of responses (40%) came from third sector organisations, representing the largest set of responses by sector, while nearly 30% were individual responses. There was also a notable representation from the public sector, with 11 responses from public sector organisations, of which nine were local councils from across the UK. A full list of respondents received by the Commission is listed in Annexe B.

The Call for Evidence responses were organised in NVivo, a software program used for qualitative and mixed-methods research. It is used for the analysis of unstructured text, audio, video, and image data. The Call for Evidence data were subsequently analysed using thematic analysis following the approach proposed by Clark and Braun (2013)¹ consisting of familiarisation with the data and a combination of inductive and deductive coding to capture the semantic and conceptual reading of the data, and to build categories and themes from the codes. Deductive codes were informed by the 14 domains of the Indicators of Integration Framework² including 14 key domains grouped according to (1) markers and means (work, housing, education, health and social care, leisure); (2) social connections (bonds with people sharing similar backgrounds and experiences, bridges into the host community, links to services and support organisations); (3) facilitators (language and communication, culture, digital skills, safety, stability); and (4) foundation (rights and responsibilities). In this process, the coded data were, first, categorised and linked by relationship. In a next step, links were established between the categories so that overarching themes could be identified. Within each theme, findings were grouped into Challenges and Solutions, as identified by respondents.

The following six themes structure the remainder of the report:



Governance



Accommodation and Living Conditions



Education and English Language Provision



Employment and Entrepreneurs



Social Inclusion



Health and Mental Health

It is important to note that respondents took different positions with regards to each of these themes representing a wide range of opinions on a complex topic such as this. This report attempts to synthesise the learning from across the range of responses, whilst acknowledging the breadth of expertise and perspectives which are represented. Furthermore, all quotations from respondents to the Call for Evidence are presented as they were submitted, which may include typographical and grammatical errors.

In the following, the results will be presented based on the six themes; highlighting overall insights and identified challenges and solutions to improving the impact of the refugee and asylum system on integration related experiences among diverse groups of people with lived experience.

Note on Presentation of Responses

All quotations from respondents to the Call for Evidence are presented as they were submitted, which may include typographical and grammatical errors. It should also be noted that not all respondents provided demographic information, and that any discrepancy in the information given here is a result of the variable information provided to the Commission.

Governance



This section encompasses four sub-themes that stood out prominently from the responses to the Call for Evidence relating to governance and the asylum process: National Government, Local Government, Asylum System, and Resettlement Schemes.

Respondents from all sectors attended to all sub-themes. Half of respondents from each sector raised challenges related to the asylum system in their responses. Almost 60% of third sector respondents problematised government integration policy, while public sector respondents paid more attention to local governments and frontline services. This may be attributable to the fact that most public sector respondents consist of local council members and staff, who are more familiar with local-level challenges and solutions to integration. It is also notable that more than 90% of public sector respondents mentioned resettlement schemes, while this did not appear as a significant topic for third sector and other respondents. Local councils have engaged with refugees through various resettlement schemes and community sponsorship, which may have resulted in the high rate of interest amongst public sector actors.

Though different groups of respondents focused on different areas of governance, it is clear that they see these as intertwined; such that addressing one area of governance requires and impacts the possibilities of addressing another.

1.1 National Government

1.1.1.Challenges

Respondents expressed diverse reactions to and evaluations of various current government policies related to refugee integration in the UK. These ranged from deep concern to frustration and scepticism regarding the government's approach to integration. Many respondents expressed apprehension over governmental plans, such as using barracks and remote facilities for asylum accommodation, which they described as "inhumane" and "potentially retraumatizing". Many respondents also strongly disapproved of the Illegal Migration Act and the Nationality and Borders Act, which they perceived as undermining integration efforts.

"Government plans to use barracks, barge boats and other remote prison-like facilities will totally undermine any plans to improve refugee integration in the UK. These facilities are retraumatizing and harmful for many asylum seekers and modern slavery survivors, and do not assist people to feel like the UK is somewhere where they can rebuild their lives."

Respondent 34

"However, the government has taken the opposite approach with the 'illegal migration bill' which, instead of fixing the problems with the asylum system, dismantles it entirely. As the UNHCR has stated, the bill 'would amount to an asylum ban – extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the United Kingdom for those who arrive irregularly.'"

Respondent 32

Respondents also noted specific government policies that they see as preventing meaningful integration. For instance, they contrasted the national government's focus on short-term electoral cycles with the lifelong process of integration. Some respondents expressed scepticism over the current government's approach to integration; instead, they felt that the government is focused on "assimilation".

"I do not believe the current government care, at all, about the meaningful integration of refugees as their efforts are solely focused on doubling down on their hostile environment agenda. The government are more likely to support policies that promote assimilation – a process by which new arrivals should essentially abandon all of their cultural heritage, religion, language etc and adopt those of the host nation. The current government do not believe in a two-way approach to integration as they feel that 'Britain' has already done enough to make new arrivals welcome and the onus should now be entirely on the new arrivals to 'fit in', ignoring entirely the very real barriers that exist for refugees when it comes to integration. The answer to your question is unfortunately, I simply do not know how to make them re-prioritise this issue without problematising refugee communities."

Respondent 162

Beyond policies and practices, respondents questioned governmental discourses related to refugees. For instance, one respondent noted concerns that some government discourses "demonise" asylum seekers.

Some respondents suggested learning from successful policies, such as those in Wales and Scotland, or called for the establishment of international agreements to ensure a fair and coordinated approach to refugee reception.

1.1.2. Solutions

Respondents offered a range of suggestions for improving government policies and approaches related to refugees and asylum seekers.

Respondents emphasised the need to abandon perceived "hostile" measures and policies and to prioritise the integration of refugees, including viewing them as assets to the country. Significantly, respondents focused on the issue of human rights, urging for the protection of both refugees and host communities, the cessation of criminalisation and discrimination, and the recognition of the needs of diverse refugee groups.

"Current hostile policies are probably more expensive than effective integration policies – the current system increases cost in accommodation, subsistence payments, catering, healthcare, Home Office staff. It passes on additional costs to the judiciary, the legal aid agency and the government's own legal costs. This funding could instead be put to use assisting integration so that refugees and asylum-seekers can rebuild their lives and contribute to the UK economy and society."

Respondent 32

"Policies to be put in place that protects both the hosting communities and the sanctuary seekers."

Respondent 127

Some respondents suggested learning from successful policies, such as those in Wales and Scotland, or called for the establishment of international agreements to ensure a fair and coordinated approach to refugee reception.

Others highlighted the need to combat harmful rhetoric and misinformation and more clearly demonstrate the realities of refugee life and barriers they face.

"I don't think it is possible unless the issues are tackled from their routes, starting by the government giving up on the hostile environment and cooling down its rhetoric narrative."

Respondent 140

"To improve integration, the government must begin by stopping its demonisation and criminalisation of asylum seekers. It must be honest with the public about the conflicts and persecution that people are fleeing, and it must commit to building a system that is based on believing people's testimonies."

Respondent 34

In terms of integration policies, respondents emphasised the need for a comprehensive national integration strategy. Some respondents suggested that this strategy should be led by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to ensure equitable funding and service provision. Others suggested that it should be administered by an independent body that coordinates activities at various levels, involving voluntary, local, and devolved sectors. Numerous respondents agreed that the national integration strategy should have clear goals and responsibilities for different stakeholders, promoting coordination and collaboration. This strategy should also recognise the diverse needs of refugees and asylum seekers, including tailored support for language, employment, housing, education, and healthcare. To enhance integration, services should begin early and include comprehensive support, and policies should be designed to provide holistic assistance. In addition, there was a call for more involvement of refugees in the policy-making process and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track integration progress.

“Challenge the anti-refugee laws which will risk the lives and well-being of people.”

Respondent 118

Overall, solutions focused on better communication, coordination, and investment and, critically, a shift towards a humane, refugee-centred integration process across all levels of policy and provisioning.

1.2. Local Government

1.2.1. Challenges

Many respondents highlighted concerns related to the coordination between central and local governments, as well as the fragmented provision of integration services, lack of trauma-informed approaches, and limited access to services in certain areas.

“Many voluntary organisations face poor information-sharing practices, communication, and limited engagement from Local Authorities which makes it difficult to properly support clients and assess needs amongst people seeking asylum and refugees in their area.”

Respondent 26

1.2.2. Solutions

Respondents highlighted the importance of identifying shared objectives and fostering a genuine desire to support refugees across the different levels of government and within civil society. This coordination was seen as essential for a more effective integration process.

Regarding communication and coordination, respondents noted the need for improved communication between local and central governments, involving MPs in addressing the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, and strengthening relationships between government departments and local authorities. They also called for more efficient communication with the Home Office and sharing data on safeguarding needs.

“There is a communication gap between local authorities and central government entities. MP’s should be given more authority to chase down refugees and asylum seekers problems with local and central government.”

Respondent 110

For improved cross-sector coordination, respondents recommended employing more staff to enhance networking and communication between different agencies.

“Employ more staff to enable greater networking and communication between different agencies.”

Respondent 132

Some called for clearer lines of responsibility among stakeholders, building on positive experiences from partnership schemes, and joined-up partnership working to share best practices and information.

“Establish Clear Lines of Responsibility: It is essential that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Governments and the voluntary sector should establish clear lines of responsibility, particularly for areas such as housing, education, employment, and health.”

Respondent 120

Others advocated for data sharing on individuals leaving the asylum system with local authorities, service providers, and the voluntary sector.

Overall, responses stressed the significance of leadership and collaboration across local and national levels and the necessity for a unified commitment to refugee integration; as well as the need to adopt a positive and inclusive perspective towards refugees as crucial elements for advancing integration policies and practices.

1.3 The Asylum System

1.3.1. Challenges

Respondents described a wide range of challenges to and major areas of concern within the current asylum system.

There was a prevailing sense across responses that the current system is uncertain and inhumane. Respondents critiqued the system itself, as well as the lack of information made available to asylum seekers about the system. They noted that individuals may arrive without a clear understanding of how to claim asylum, leading to confusion and potential mistakes in the application process. Respondents further argued that legal aid in such cases can be inconsistent and insufficient, resulting in poorly handled claims and the need for further submissions.

Respondents also emphasised that the limited availability of safe and legal routes to seek asylum pushes individuals towards dangerous, illegal paths, often under the control of organised criminals.

“The government should introduce more safe routes to come to the UK to claim asylum, so that people don’t have to undertake dangerous journeys.”

Respondent 32

Many respondents called attention to extended waiting times and the resulting backlog of cases in the asylum system. These extended waiting periods not only carry a profound human cost, but also have financial implications, including increased healthcare expenses and the loss of productive potential.

“The costs of the current policies are enormous. Our research has shown that the longer people wait for a decision, the more likely they are to have mental and physical health problems even 21 months after the decision. Waiting, periods of destitution and experiences of racist attack all undermine integration. The human cost should be our first priority BUT there is a financial cost – healthcare, inability to work etc.”

Respondent 184

Respondents raised concerns regarding the extensive powers of the Home Secretary in terms of immigration detention. They noted that individuals can be detained for immigration purposes without a specified time limit or proper judicial oversight. This practice was indicated to have adverse effects on the physical and mental health of detainees. The financial burden on the Home Office, coupled with a low rate of absconding upon release, underscores the need for a re-evaluation of detention policies in the UK asylum and immigration system.

“The Home Secretary has vast (and expanding) powers of detention, and people can be locked up for immigration reasons without a time limit or judicial oversight. This practice is harmful to physical and mental health and the vast majority of people are released again at the end of their period of detention. It is used recklessly and in the last year the Home Office paid out £12.7 million in damages to 572 people it had detained unlawfully. Bail for Immigration Detainees report that fewer than 1% of people released from detention abscond.”

Respondent 32

There was a prevailing sense across responses that the current system is uncertain and inhumane. Respondents critiqued the system itself, as well as the lack of information made available to asylum seekers about the system.

Finally, respondents pointed to challenges around specific elements of the asylum system, such as the prohibition on working for asylum seekers, the limitations of the 28 day “move-on” period, and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) as major hurdles, making survival particularly challenging, especially when they extend over a significant period of time.

“Move-on period is hugely challenging. The Home Office funded Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility service is supposed to provide refugees with support, but in practice individuals are left to rely on the voluntary sector, the demand is huge. The Refugee Council Private Rented Scheme typically only able to find a suitable home for a third of refugees it supports. From 2020 to 2021, 98% of new refugees approaching the scheme were homeless, 48% were able to access a private tenancy, despite specialist support, rose to 62% during COVID-19. Of those unable to access a private tenancy, almost 16% were in homelessness hostels or temporary hosting schemes, almost 4% remained street homeless”

Respondent 29

1.3.2. Solutions

Respondents offered a number of proposals to enhance the asylum system in the UK. These covered various aspects of the asylum process, with an emphasis on improving fairness, efficiency, and support for asylum seekers. Key recommendations include conducting efficient and fair assessment of asylum claims, ensuring a fair appeals process, enhancing vulnerability screening and mental health checks, streamlining proof of identity, and simplifying the navigation of the asylum system. Respondents also emphasised that providing legal representation and assistance is crucial and called for better access to legal services.

Some respondents proposed measures to address the significant backlog in the UK asylum system, including hiring additional staff to handle asylum applications, increasing funding and resources, and streamlining the application process.

“Invest in training, staff capacity and escalation pathways to accelerate quality Home Office decision-making and reduce delays.” –

Respondent 26

Respondents offered a number of proposals to enhance the asylum system in the UK. These covered various aspects of the asylum process, with an emphasis on improving fairness, efficiency, and support for asylum seekers. Key recommendations include conducting efficient and fair assessment of asylum claims, ensuring a fair appeals process, enhancing vulnerability screening and mental health checks, streamlining proof of identity, and simplifying the navigation of the asylum system.

Other respondents suggested alternatives to asylum detention. One respondent proposed an “Alternatives to Detention” scheme, drawing from a UNHCR initiative that involved an independent review of cases and provided support throughout the process, emphasising the importance of humane and compassionate treatment of asylum seekers within the immigration system.

‘Avoiding detention: Detention can be traumatic for asylum seekers and can negatively impact their mental health. Whenever possible, systems should avoid detaining asylum seekers who do not receive status and should consider alternatives to detention such as community-based programs.’

Respondent 120

As noted earlier, many respondents advocated for extending the move-on period for refugees granted status to ensure their successful integration into the community.

“Extend 28-day period to at least 56 days, in line with Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) prevention duty timeframes, to allow LAs time to prevent homelessness and allow time to open bank account, make Universal Credit (UC) claim and receive first payment. Make it possible to submit UC claim online without bank details.”

Respondent 29

For those who have been refused asylum and exhausted their right to appeal, respondents noted that it is crucial to offer continuing support. For instance, providing discretionary leave to remain with permission to work and improving access to available legal routes and legal counsel can empower these individuals to navigate their status and options more effectively. Some respondents suggested that continuing housing support is necessary to prevent destitution after asylum refusals. Furthermore, avoiding forced deportation and supporting safe and smooth resettlement to another country, where cultural and contextual factors enable integration, was seen as a beneficial approach. In cases of voluntary return, establishing appropriate voluntary return schemes, offering financial support, and providing information and time for individuals to make informed choices was suggested as a way to facilitate a more humane and transparent process.

“It is critical that the UK refugee and asylum system monitor any returns (voluntary or forced) to ensure that the ultimate concern of safety is fulfilled, justifying and validating the decision to refuse status. Where this criteria is not satisfied, the UK is morally and ethically in breach of its role as a progressive and transparent signatory to the Convention of Human Rights.”

Respondent 52

1.4 Resettlement Schemes

Respondents highlighted a range of challenges and disparities in the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers across resettlement schemes, and those receiving other forms of protection through bespoke, nationality-based visa schemes. This section first addresses general challenges and solutions, followed by challenges and solutions linked to specific resettlement and protection schemes.

1.4.1. Challenges

Respondents again identified a lack of coordination and communication between government departments, central government, devolved and local governments, and civil society as a major impediment to effective refugee integration across schemes.

Respondents argued that the existence of different tiers of support and entitlements leads to inequities. Relatedly, they described the differential treatment and perception of refugees based on their country of origin, with Ukrainians seen as receiving more positive treatment and support compared to those from other nations. Respondents primarily attributed these disparities to government policies and public perception.

“The disparity in funding pots and support to local authorities for displaced people on different humanitarian schemes – including Afghans under ACRS and ARAP and Ukrainians on the visa led schemes – make it difficult to achieve a coordinated approach to refugee integration. For example, unlike other schemes such as the ACRS where funding is mapped out across a 3-year period, there is uncertainty as to the funding available for Ukrainian refugees in the longer-term which is making it hard for councils to plan their response.”

Respondent 9

“Currently there is a varied provision of rights and entitlements for those receiving protection in the UK, often according to which scheme they arrived on, or if they came through the asylum system. For instance, Afghans under ACRS Pathway 1 have no way to apply for family reunion, unlike those on Pathway 2 or with refugee status, and Ukrainians are granted 3 years leave to remain while refugees are granted 5.”

Respondent 30

Afghan Scheme

Challenges related to the Afghan resettlement scheme echoed the general challenges above, as well as those noted for other country-specific schemes. Respondents noted strained local services and civil society, underfunding that has not kept pace with growing demand, limited awareness among new arrivals about the workings of the system, and individuals remaining in precarious conditions, including without employment and housing.

Responses outlined several strategies to enhance the support and integration of Afghan refugees. Many of these echo suggestions for improving the resettlement process as a whole. For instance, respondents recommended engaging with Afghan refugees directly to understand their concerns as a crucial first step for providing support, establishing trust, and building social links. They also proposed centrally-coordinated English language teaching for Afghan refugees with the aim of streamlining efforts, saving time, and reducing costs compared to the current volunteer-based model. Others suggested organising volunteering opportunities to provide Afghans with practical insights into life in the UK, facilitate English language learning, and equip them with valuable skills for future employment. Critically, respondents emphasised that Afghans should be treated as integral parts of society rather than solely as refugees.

Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas)

Respondents' key concern related to British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)) individuals was the financial burden on BN(O) students, who face high international fees and seek interest-free loans and special grants for more affordable education. Respondents also indicated a need for timely assessment and support for BN(O) students with unidentified Special Education Needs and limited English proficiency.

Regarding educational needs, respondents recommended collaboration with bilingual educational psychologists who are also BN(O) status holders to address these students' needs and assist other young refugees with similar challenges. These underscore the need for financial and mental support to ensure equitable access to education and well-being for BN(O) students.

Some respondents called attention to the ways in which BN(O) policies could serve as a model for assisting wider refugee and asylum cohorts.

“Improved funding could assist this (i.e. the VCS have established great integration support for Hong Kong BN(O) arrivals in London due to BN(O) funding pots, and similar services could be established for other refugee and asylum cohorts with funding).”

Respondent 61

Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme

Responses here underscored two key challenges in the resettlement process. First, the complexity of paperwork and forms presents challenges, even in the context of community sponsorship initiatives, making the process more burdensome for sponsors and refugees. Second, the absence of local authorities during post-arrival visits conducted by the Home Office was noted to hinder effective communication and advice on the integration of resettled families. These challenges highlight the need for streamlining administrative processes and enhancing collaboration among relevant stakeholders in refugee resettlement programs.

Solutions again echoed those proposed for improving resettlement schemes and the asylum system in general. For instance, respondents advocated for closer collaboration between local authorities and community sponsorship groups. They also recommended that local authorities proactively share information about available services for refugees in their respective areas with community sponsorship groups.

Ukrainian Schemes

Respondents offered insights into a range of challenges related to hosting and resettlement within the context of different schemes to support Ukrainians, including Homes for Ukraine and the Ukrainian Family Scheme, and their different rules and entitlements. For example, for the Ukrainian Family Scheme, challenges encountered included the absence of “thank you” payments and the lack of protection from rising council tax, potentially affecting their willingness and ability to host refugees.

Local authorities and service providers described challenges stemming from sudden and unprepared responses to crises, leading to capacity limitations and the need for increased funding. Respondents also noted that the absence of comprehensive data on the Ukrainian Family Scheme hinders the understanding and monitoring of the population’s characteristics and locations.

Finally, inconsistent central government support and inadequate long-term funding planning were argued to have contributed to uncertainties in effectively supporting and integrating Ukrainians.

Proposed solutions related to Ukrainians ranged widely. Some respondents recommended amending council tax regulations to safeguard hosts from rising council tax bills, aiming to ease the financial burden on those hosting refugees. Others noted a need to clarify the details and allocation of the £150 million one-off funding and discuss long-term

funding plans for Ukrainian refugees with local authorities. Another recommendation highlighted the need for further learning and planning within the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, emphasising the importance of being prepared for potential future waves of forced migration. One respondent proposed the establishment of a Ukraine Hub to support Ukrainian refugees and volunteers, fostering better understanding and assistance.

Respondents also touched on the need for better cooperation and communication. They suggested that DLUHC and Home Office should work with local authorities to identify people who arrived through the Ukraine Family Scheme and publish data on their numbers and demographics. It was further recommended that DLUHC and Home Office provide monthly payments to Ukrainian Family Scheme participants as a token of gratitude for their ongoing support, mirroring the “thank you” payments provided to hosts in other schemes. Finally, there was a call for a review of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme to address potential challenges in case of further forced migration due to conflict.

1.4.2. Solutions

Respondents laid out a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the disparities and challenges in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, alongside those arriving under other forms of protection visas such as those from Ukraine and Hong Kong.

Some respondents stressed the importance of location-specific responses, arguing against a one-size-fits-all approach and urging tailored policies based on individuals’ country of origin, age, religious background, and the specific threats they face. Interestingly, others advocated for an official universal scheme to ensure that resources and support currently available to Afghans and Ukrainians are extended to all and refugees, fostering parity across different schemes.

Broadly, respondents recommended the development of a clear integration strategy, the delivery of integration services from early resettlement stages, and an end to the “two-tier” discourse between resettlement and protections schemes and the asylum system. They urged the government to establish

Respondents also emphasised the importance of case workers in supporting asylum seekers and refugees, pointing out that having a dedicated case worker significantly enhances the overall experience for asylum seekers. Case workers play a crucial role in providing information, regular check-ins, facilitating

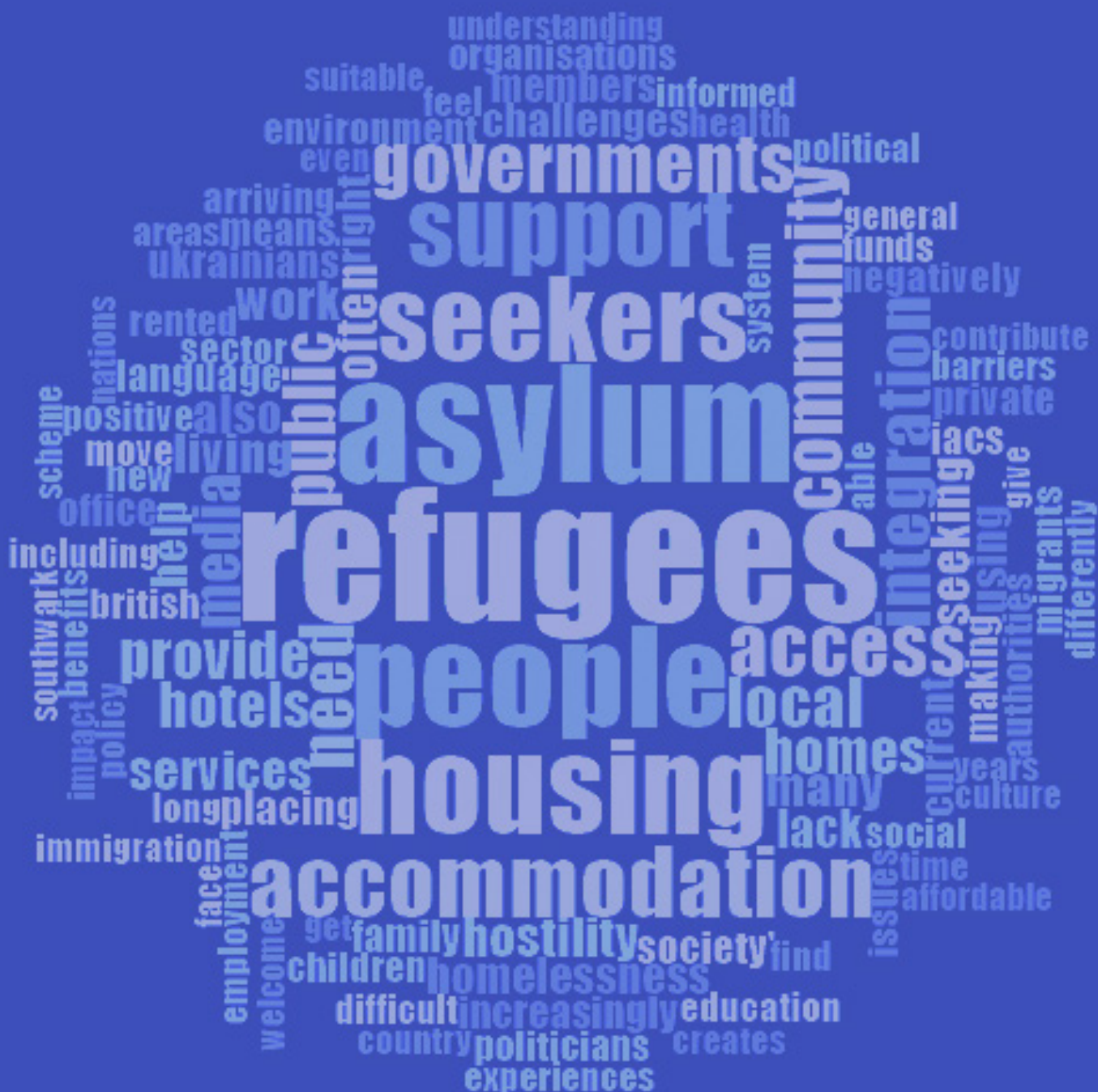
Broadly, respondents recommended the development of a clear integration strategy, the delivery of integration services from early resettlement stages, and an end to the “two-tier” discourse between resettlement and protections schemes and the asylum system. They urged the government to establish a more consistent approach to status, rights, and entitlements, simplifying the process for stakeholders.

a more consistent approach to status, rights, and entitlements, simplifying the process for stakeholders. Relatedly, respondents further advocated for one set of rules around access to education for all refugees and asylum seekers. Here, they suggested there is much to learn from the experiences of Ukrainian visa holders and Afghan resettlement schemes, and suggested requesting the voluntary and community sector to translate these lessons into future planning and displacement policy. Overall, these recommendations are oriented around creating more equitable and effective policies for refugee integration in the UK.

access to essential services like legal assistance and healthcare, and assisting with educational opportunities. Responses called for broader access to case worker support, extending it beyond resettlement schemes to include all refugees. This would help bridge the gap in experiences between those with and without case workers, ensuring that all individuals receive the necessary support for successful integration.

“There is a significant difference in experience between people who have a caseworker and those who don’t. The caseworker checks up on the client at regular intervals, helps to find a solicitor/GP and secure a college place. Ida who had a social worker got into college after three months. For Maimuna who had no caseworker, it took more than nine years to be accepted!”

Respondent 192



Accommodation and Living Conditions



Accommodation and living conditions are key elements of people's basic well-being, and ability to integrate. Poor or unsanitary housing, or insecure or unsafe living conditions can create or exacerbate physical and mental health conditions. Without a safe, clean, and sanitary place to live, people are less likely to be able to access other services or to enter into education or employment.

This section calls attention to the ways in which living conditions powerfully impact experiences of and the potential for meaningful integration. Solutions and challenges in this section highlight structural and

It is important to note that that across all these topics, respondents highlighted the 28 day "move-on" period as a major challenge to the wellbeing and security of refugees and asylum seekers and a significant impediment to integration.

2.1. Asylum Accommodation

Accommodation represents the biggest government cost within the current asylum system).³ The backlog of applications means that the accommodation costs increase further because people are housed in temporary accommodation for longer whilst they wait for a decision on their application. There are

Accommodation and living conditions are key elements of people's basic well-being, and ability to integrate. Poor or unsanitary housing, or insecure or unsafe living conditions can create or exacerbate physical and mental health conditions.

discursive problems and various ways that actors in different social realms can improve the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers and thereby better support integration. Accommodation condition, location, and provision shape an individuals' sense of security and stability, their opportunities for social bonds, bridges, and links, their physical and mental health and wellbeing, and their access to education, healthcare, and employment.

Responses to the Call for Evidence fell into four main topics relating to living conditions: 1) asylum accommodation, 2) refugee accommodation, 3) compounding factors faced by specific groups of refugees and asylum seekers, and 4) public discourse. Within each topic, respondents raised concerns around the quality of accommodation, the nature of the dispersal process for asylum seekers, the uncertainty of temporary accommodation, the challenges of finding affordable housing, and the precarity caused by the move-on period.

additional ongoing indirect costs since inappropriate accommodation hampers long-term ability to integrate.⁴

There is significant overlap between the housing challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers (as well as UK citizens). Yet, due to the different policies, practices, procedures, and rights accorded to each group, asylum seekers also face some distinct housing challenges that require distinct solutions. This section will address each of these in turn.

2.1.1. Challenges

Respondents noted that the housing challenges facing asylum seekers reflect those faced by individuals across the UK. Housing availability is limited, with a shortage of suitable and affordable properties in many cities. This makes it difficult for organisations like The No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) to secure accommodation for asylum seekers and contributes to the prevalence of hotel and other temporary accommodation. The capacity of such support organisations is strained as they grapple with increased rents and a deficit of suitable housing.

“The deficit of suitable and affordable housing in many UK cities makes it more difficult for NACCOM members to maintain and acquire new properties to use to support refugees and people seeking asylum. Simultaneously these pressures have restricted access to private rented sector for many refugees, which has delayed move-on and resulted in people staying in member accommodation for longer.”

Respondent 26

Respondents argued that hotel accommodation is especially challenging to integration, as it can serve to isolate asylum seekers, inhibit them from build social bonds and bridges, and may evoke a negative reaction from local residents. Hotel accommodation also suffers from challenges related to the awareness and training of hotel staff, lack of access to cooking or washing facilities, and difficulties in cross-sector communication, which affect the quality of services.

“In the majority of hotels housing asylum seekers that we are aware of, hotel staff are not trained to answer the questions that asylum seekers have and simply signpost people to Migrant Help – even if it relates to a matter that is outside of the remit of Migrant Help.”

Respondent 32

Some respondents noted mistreatment or poor management by temporary accommodation providers, especially hotels. These included reports of a lack of respect for tenants, poor information sharing, and minimal oversight.

“Accommodation providers are simply not being supervised enough by authorities and get away with poor or abusive treatment.”

Respondent 13

Respondents further posited that some of these factors – namely poor information sharing and lack of oversight – could lead to increased risks for asylum seekers in temporary accommodation.

“Lack of information sharing from providers of hotel accommodation - families could go missing.”

Respondent 156

In terms of the accommodation itself, some respondents criticised food provision in hotels and other temporary forms of accommodation. These responses pointed to the limited variety and choice, as well as lack of culturally or allergy-appropriate dietary provisions, which may lead to hunger among asylum seekers.

“Lack of access to cooking facilities in hotel accommodation where joint catering provision for asylum seekers and refugees from very different cultural context means that provision of culturally familiar food for all is impossible, adds to perceptions of isolation and increases distress.”

Respondent 11

In general, respondents emphasised concerns about substandard living conditions in temporary accommodation facilities for asylum seekers. According to many respondents, this has been a longstanding problem that has yet to be sufficiently addressed. The respondent from Southwark Council, for instance, described raising consistent worries about overcrowding, food quality, and hygiene. Others pointed to specific cases of poor conditions leading to negative consequences for asylum seeker residents:

“Widespread and extensive reports of substandard, unsanitary and, in some cases, unsafe asylum accommodation have been commonplace for many years. But they are worsening as the backlog in asylum applications increases. Late in 2022, for example, the Manston immigration processing centre was found to be housing 4,000 people seeking asylum, when it was designed for just 1,600 for a maximum of 24 hours. Overcrowding led to a severe outbreak of diphtheria in the centre, which resulted in one man’s death.”

Respondent 138

“The standard of accommodation in Southwark is often unacceptable, especially for extended stays. Although the scale of the problem has increased since the arrival of contingency IACs, IAC accommodation has long been a source of concern. From when our most longstanding IAC opened over 15 years ago, Southwark Council has raised concerns to the Home Office about cramped conditions, little variation in or quality of food provided, and no meaningful activities for residents. Meanwhile, there have also been longstanding concerns about the hygiene of the IAC. These concerns have been echoed by Southwark MP Helen Hayes as long ago as 2018 in a Westminster Hall Debate in 2018, when she also raised concerns that her attempts to contact the Home Office regarding standards of accommodation at the IAC had not been responded to by the Home Office.”

Respondent 2

Others referenced the use of military barracks and other temporary accommodations that present inadequate living conditions.

“Currently people seeking asylum are made to live in appalling conditions in hotels or other temporary forms of accommodation, with an increasing move towards the use of military sites such as army barracks, in isolated and dilapidated forms of accommodation that amount to a form of quasi-detention.”

Respondent 32

Third sector respondents in particular suggested that relocation to temporary accommodation is especially an issue in areas with already strained resources. Relocation often takes place without consulting local authorities or alerting local third sector actors who may be able to step in to support new arrivals.

Respondents further noted that the nature of temporary housing in itself directly impacts an individual’s wellbeing and capacity for integration.

“Until people know where they will be living, they cannot plan for their future lives.”

Respondent 154

2.1.2. Solutions

Respondents’ proposed solutions focused on changes to policies, procedures, and selection of units for asylum seeker accommodation.

Several respondents suggested allowing asylum seekers the right to work, rent, and access education immediately upon arrival, which would enable them to begin rebuilding their lives more quickly and may mitigate some of the health and mental health impacts of waiting in inadequate or temporary accommodation, dispersal, and prolonged waiting periods.

“If they had the right to work, to rent etc then asylum seekers would be able to rebuild much quicker and we could alleviate the mental health stress of being stuck in limbo whilst waiting for your claim to be processed.”

Respondent 37

Regarding dispersal, respondents recommended more careful consideration of selected locations, focusing on areas with appropriate infrastructures. They also suggested taking asylum seekers’ family and social networks into account when placing them in housing.

Some respondents called for an end to specific types of accommodation, such as hotels and military barracks.

“The government should end the use of hotels and military barracks to house asylum seekers. These forms of accommodation have been shown to be extremely harmful to mental and physical health of asylum seekers. There has also been a detrimental impact on wider community race relations.”

Respondent 32

On the other hand, others recognised that given the backlog of asylum cases, these sites were likely to continue to be used for the foreseeable future and instead called for improvements of the conditions of these sites.

Third sector respondents pointed out that it is often difficult for local support agencies to communicate with the hotel management or gain access to the premises to provide services and therefore called for greater accountability of subcontracted management with hotels.

Some respondents suggested providing incentives for those who agree to live in less urban areas. Other practical solutions included providing Wi-Fi in temporary accommodations, offering a greater choice of food options and giving residents more agency over their diets, offering longer term accommodation, and focusing on improving the safety of accommodations.

2.2. Refugee Accommodation

Responses noted that transitioning after being granted leave to remain in the UK poses significant challenges for refugees, particularly in terms of accessing social or private housing. The high demand for housing in some areas exacerbates this issue. Housing costs are another significant barrier, as affordable housing is scarce, and rent prices continue to rise. This housing crisis, particularly in high-cost areas like London, adds to the challenges faced by refugees, intensifying deprivation and compounding the difficulties they encounter after fleeing traumatic experiences. This is a critical issue to address as stable housing is identified as a pivotal factor for successful integration, and the absence of it creates obstacles for individuals to unlock their potential for integration.

2.2.1. Challenges

Responses in this theme called attention to compounding policy and structural challenges that make it difficult for refugees to access safe, habitable housing. Much like housing for asylum seekers, refugee housing challenges closely mirror those faced by vulnerable families and young individuals at risk of homelessness, including poverty, limited resources, domestic violence, unmet health needs, constrained

employment and educational opportunities, housing scarcity, and affordability concerns. Indeed, respondents pointed out that a significant proportion of those grappling with poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion have refugee backgrounds.

“There are a number of key challenges identified by staff at the CHC as being critical when addressing refugee integration. Many of these same challenges are at the heart of our work in addressing the needs of families and young people who are vulnerable to homelessness. These include poverty and lack of resources, domestic violence, unmet health needs including mental health challenges, lack of opportunities for retraining and employment often compounded by poor digital skills and educational achievement, poor or under-developed parenting skills and a dire housing supply shortage or lack of affordable housing.”

Respondent 52

“The number of people facing homelessness and approaching our network for support directly from Home Office accommodation more than tripled last year. In 2021-2022, our members accommodated 652 adult refugees, accounting for 29% of all people accommodated.”

Respondent 26

A unique housing issue faced by refugees given leave to remain is the 28 day “move-on” period. As noted above, many respondents to the Call for Evidence drew attention to the 28 day move-on period. This period following the award of leave to remain is often characterised by a lack of social housing, further exacerbated by limited access to council properties. Respondents highlighted the fact that 28 days proves an inadequate amount of time for individuals to find stable housing, employment, or navigate the complex benefits system. This short timeframe generates anxiety and increases the likelihood of homelessness or forces individuals into subpar accommodation.

Respondents highlighted the fact that 28 days proves an inadequate amount of time for individuals to find stable housing, employment, or navigate the complex benefits system. This short timeframe generates anxiety and increases the likelihood of homelessness or forces individuals into subpar accommodation.

Some respondents noted that a lack of transitional support and resources for new refugees during this crucial period not only hinders their integration, but can also make individuals susceptible to modern slavery and trafficking:

“If/when individuals are granted asylum, they are typically given 28 days’ notice to vacate asylum accommodation, find suitable, affordable and stable accommodation, access banking and potentially find employment or seek benefits. There is a lack of transitional support during this period. Individuals face additional barriers such as language, not understanding the complexities of the system, lack of up-front costs for housing and limited employment options. This impedes a safe pathway to community integration, forcing many into homelessness systems, unfit to meet their needs, and may heighten risks of being targeted for modern slavery/trafficking.”

Respondent 131

They added that the limitations placed on asylum seekers (no right to work, etc.) exacerbate the challenge of securing housing in that time. They also noted that financial assistance for refugees may be constrained by the absence of a credit history, insufficient income, and the limited availability of loans or mortgages. Furthermore, the Local Housing Allowance often proves insufficient to cover the escalating costs of rent.

“Asylum seekers given status have 28 days to vacate asylum accommodation, often people find themselves homeless. They often have no financial means to meet the upfront costs for renting and no guarantors to enable them to access private housing.”

Respondent 131

While support organisations play a vital role, their resources are often constrained when addressing challenges related to housing, financial struggles, and employment limitations encountered by those seeking their services.

Additionally, respondents noted that the housing crisis, cost of living crisis, high rents, and poor conditions exacerbate housing problems. Refugee respondents detailed their lived experiences of unsanitary, unclean, or unsafe accommodation, with problems such as mould, damp, and lack of suitable cooking or bathroom facilities being the most prevalent.

“We are living in a very overcrowded, run-down property and it is depressing. There is mould on the walls, and I worry that we will get ill. I am cleaning all the time.”

Respondent 48

They further highlighted the complex links between private accommodation and language, employment and employability, and wellbeing.

“The bad things are that life is a day-to-day struggle. My husband can only work as an Uber driver because he did not get any other job and we do not have enough money to buy food sometimes. We also live in a very ugly, poor place where there is lots of damp on the walls and I worry about my girls getting sick. It is hard to live in the UK where it always rains and it costs so much to buy fresh fruit and vegetables and to heat the house. I was a teacher at home but here I can only work in nurseries as I don’t have good enough English to teach.”

Respondent 42

Respondents further cited concerns about the discriminatory practices of some private landlords, which can increase the challenge of finding suitable private housing.

“In the private sector there is a lot of discrimination and exclusion which is unrecognised.”

Respondent 140

Respondents argued that living conditions can hinder individuals’ ability to concentrate and engage in studies or work, particularly when simultaneously dealing with family members’ illnesses and depression.

“It is also hard to concentrate at home and do my studies because my mother is sick and very depressed, and we live in a very small place. I share a bedroom with my sister.”

Respondent 43

Some respondents added that housing allocation processes by local authorities and welfare benefit services tend to lack a trauma-informed approach, making it difficult for trauma survivors to disclose intricate health conditions that should be considered in allocating housing. Relatedly, refugees with specific housing requirements may not automatically receive priority for social housing, resulting in social isolation which can hinder integration. Basic housing needs often take precedence over addressing other protected characteristics, such as disabilities and diverse sexual orientations, or cultural and relational concerns.

“There is also a lack of appropriately located good-quality, and affordable housing for refugees. Many refugees have multiple, sometimes hidden, vulnerabilities and specific housing needs, but generally will not automatically qualify as priority need for social housing – of which there is a shortage. Available housing tends to be in areas that led to social isolation, a lack of integration, or in places that did not account for inter-ethnic pressures that may exist. Meanwhile, meeting basic housing need often takes priority over addressing needs related to a person’s protected characteristics, such as disability and sexuality.”

Respondent 26

2.2.2. Solutions

Respondents called for major changes to housing provisioning and practices. Many suggested extending the 28 day “move-on” period to allow individuals and the agencies that may be assisting them more time to secure housing. Some pointed to the Lift the Ban campaign, which is advocating for increasing the move-on period to 56 days to be in line with broader homelessness regulations.

Relatedly, some respondents proposed improved cooperation and communication between regional and central government, local government and support agencies, and amongst support agencies in order to better support those who have been granted refugee status and now face the challenge of securing work, education, and accommodation. They posited that better communication could improve mapping local housing situations, enable support agencies to respond promptly when individuals move to their area, and better connect refugees, especially those facing homelessness, with housing support services.

“Although Home Office officers have confirmed that regular liaison, a local forum and co-operation with organisations such as local authorities are requirements of Clearsprings’ procurement contract, this does not happen in a structured or reliable way.”

Respondent 2

Several respondents called broadly for more social housing and greater government investment in housing.

“Build more house.”

Respondent 163

“Govt must provide for hugely more social housing as the needs of indigenous community are also not catered for [...] We need to expand social housing.”

Respondent 31

Overall, proposed solutions focused on enabling refugees to find safe, suitable housing as a key step on the path to independence and integration.

“Integration means that people are able to find stable accommodation quickly, and begin the process of language-learning, with good supported access to support services (medical, financial), leading to them being able to take informed choices about their future lives in the UK.”

Respondent 154

To this end, respondents suggested possibilities such as increasing funding and ensuring that available housing is suitable for living. They also broadly called for a focus on supporting refugees in finding safe, suitable long-term housing.

Many respondents indicated that more support is needed to assist refugees to access private rental accommodation, including use of government funds to support housing deposits and/or initial accommodation.

“Supporting Independence: Access to Private rented accommodation that is suitable for the clients and support with helping on keeping their accommodation. This strand introduced a letting agency for migrants to the city. Recruiting a dedicated Letting Manager, work with local landlords to support more refugees into private accommodation, challenging and overcoming entrenched issues such as the perceived risks of accepting tenants on benefits.”

Respondent 6

Others underscored the imperative for addressing discrimination, exclusion, and mistreatment within the housing system to provide equitable and just housing opportunities for all, including refugees.

2.3. Compounding Factors

Certain schemes were reported to compound or present specific challenges to accommodation access. For instance, respondents described specific challenges in the Homes for Ukraine protection scheme. In particular, they highlighted inadequate vetting and preparation of hosts for the expected six-month hosting arrangement, which has led to unsuitable housing arrangements, causing further difficulties for many, including mothers with young children.

2.3.1. Challenges

The Homes for Ukraine scheme also faces similar challenges to other forms of refugee accommodation. For instance, renting private housing poses challenges for Ukrainians, with barriers including affordability, the lack of UK-based guarantors, and problems in delivering payments to hosts. Some local authorities provide support to cover upfront housing costs, but criteria may exclude displaced Ukrainians. Delays in implementing government approaches to address homelessness among Ukrainians, such as host rematching and funding for longer-term accommodation, exacerbate the risk of homelessness. The housing crisis in London has already left many Ukrainian refugees homeless, highlighting the need for long-term planning.⁵ As the number of Ukrainian arrivals at risk of homelessness continues to grow, there is a critical need for effective transitions into independent housing and employment under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Respondents noted that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and young people may be especially vulnerable to risk if placed in inappropriate housing, which can expose them to potential mistreatment and abuse. In this vein, respondents called for better provisioning for UASC in particular, and highlighted the dangers of inappropriate housing.

“Ensure appropriate accommodation: UASC should be accommodated in a safe and appropriate environment that meets their needs. Governments should work to ensure that UASC are not placed in detention centres and instead are provided with alternative forms of accommodation.”

Respondent 120

“The current system of UASC hotels has led to 100s of UASC going missing, they support for them needs to be much better and protect children from being exploited and trafficked.”

Respondent 37

2.3.2. Solutions

On the Homes for Ukraine scheme, third sector actors focused on changes by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). For instance, they argued that DLUHC should clarify the details and allocation of the dedicated one-off funding intended to support people on this scheme into longer term accommodation. This would help local authorities address their growing housing needs.

“Data published by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 9 March showed that 4,630 Ukrainian households have been at risk of or experienced homelessness in England between February 2022 and February 2023. While the government has already identified two approaches to addressing the rise of homelessness for Ukrainians, there have been delays in their implementation. For instance, in July 2022 the government committed to allowing people who arrived in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme to be rematched with hosts who offer their homes through Homes for Ukraine. However, this has not yet been coordinated through the Home Office and DLUHC, despite having the potential to act as a low-cost solution to rising homelessness. Separately DLUHC announced £150 million one-off funding (to support people on the Ukraine schemes into longer-term accommodation) last December but the details are outstanding, meaning that it is difficult for the devolved authorities and local authorities in England to plan accommodation support going forward.”

Respondent 9

Ukrainian arrivals at risk of homelessness continues to grow, there is a critical need for effective transitions into independent housing and employment under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Third sector actors additionally called for changes to the ways young people and UASC are housed. They suggested prioritising foster care, stable placements, and long-term accommodation for UASC and young people.

“Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in particular need to be placed in care, not hotels, to ensure that they are safe and have access to the support they need to continue their education.”

Respondent 21

“Children need placement in foster homes not hotels.”

Respondent 114

2.4 Public Discourse

Beyond structural and policy concerns, respondents described differential public discourses about resettled refugees and other groups seeking refuge in the UK, with Ukrainian refugees reported to experience a more positive reception compared to refugees from other regions such as Syria and Afghanistan. The exacerbated feelings of a “tiered system”.

2.4.1. Challenges

Respondents suggested that differential public discourse around different refugee cohorts and between asylum seekers and refugees raises questions about the fairness and consistency of the asylum system.

“I have only dealt with Ukraine refugees which have been held in a far more positive light than Syrian or Afghan refugees, questions need to be asked why this is.”

Respondent 119

Others more generally proposed that negative discourse not only influences public opinion but may also directly affect accessibility of housing. When refugees are portrayed using stigmatising language and seen as threatening to the economy, culture, and national security, landlords and others may be reluctant to offer refugee’s housing.

“It has a large effect because it seeps into people’s consciousness that people are here “illegally” and so landlords, employers etc become more wary and less likely to support refugees. It also promotes resentment and anger when people in the UK are directed to blame their problems on migrants.”

Respondent 37

2.4.2. Solutions

Respondents called broadly for an end to negative rhetoric in the media and by politicians, an end to hostility and discrimination amongst the wider UK population, as well as a closer examination of the unequal perceptions of different refugee and asylum seeker populations. Notably, as in other mentions of discursive concerns, respondents’ suggestions for how to improve attitudes and change the ways local Brits think and talk about refugees and asylum seekers remained underdefined.

Some of the more detailed suggestions included promoting the use of evidence-based data about refugees and asylum seekers by government and media, bringing policy makers into direct contact with refugees and asylum seekers, and working directly with landlords to counter negative perceptions of renting to refugees receiving benefits.

“There is a need to use evidence-based data to educate and inform the general public around the potential of refugees and asylum seekers to contribute to the economy, culture and social well-being of the UK in positive and sustainable manner. We believe politicians and the media are well-placed to lead this ‘reframing’ with support from a coordinated refugee service sector.”

Respondent 52

“Recruiting a dedicated Letting Manager, work with local landlords to support more refugees into private accommodation, challenging and overcoming entrenched issues such as the perceived risks of accepting tenants on benefits.”

Respondent 6

Respondents suggested that differential public discourse around different refugee cohorts and between asylum seekers and refugees raises questions about the fairness and consistency of the asylum system.



Education and English Language Provision



Respondents to the Call for Evidence highlighted the crucial role of education and language proficiency in achieving integration. Access to and progress through the education system are both means and markers of integration. Meaningful participation in the education system creates opportunities for employment, offers possibilities for new social connections, and supports ongoing language learning and cultural exchange.

It is important to note that those granted refugee status in the UK are entitled to free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, while asylum seekers do not have access to classes for the first six months post-arrival. Asylum seekers may be able to access ESOL classes through third sector organisations. Both refugees and asylum seekers are able to enter the mainstream education system. However, respondents acknowledged difficulties faced by asylum seekers

3.1 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Research underscores the importance of English language proficiency in various aspects of integration, including employment, social interaction, and combatting loneliness.⁶ Language barriers hinder refugees' and asylum seekers' access to education and services, as well as their career prospects.

This section thus focuses on challenges around ESOL access and provisioning, and general English language-related integration challenges. Respondents primarily highlighted challenges in access to and availability of ESOL classes for refugees and the prevention of asylum seekers from accessing ESOL classes, as well as concerns about teaching staff qualifications and a lack of government funding.

Respondents to the Call for Evidence pointed to the availability of government funding for ESOL programmes having a significant impact on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

and refugees in accessing services related to education and ESOL, as well as the challenges providers face in offering these services. They highlighted the ways in which English proficiency and education are closely tied to career development and social inclusion, illustrating the multifaceted nature of integration.

Notably, a greater proportion of public sector actors referred to the importance and challenges around ESOL and education than did third sector actors, particularly in reference to UASC. This may indicate the relatively large role that local councils assume in providing educational services and assisting UASC.

3.1.1. Challenges

Respondents to the Call for Evidence pointed to the availability of government funding for ESOL programmes having a significant impact on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Despite government commitments to promote English language skills for all residents, real-terms funding for ESOL delivery substantially declined by almost 60% between 2008/09 and 2019/19.⁷ This decrease in funding has led to a reduction in the number of educational providers offering ESOL classes, limiting the ability of asylum seekers to acquire this knowledge. Education services across all sectors of UK society have been adversely affected by austerity and spending cuts over the last decade. Total spending on adult education and apprenticeships fell by 38% in real-terms between 2010–11 and 2020–21, with a 50% fall in spending on classroom-based adult education (these figures exclude higher education).⁸

Beyond funding concerns, respondents described a situation of limited and differential access, with asylum seekers needing to wait 6 months until they are eligible for free ESOL classes. This delay can hinder the ability to integrate, engage in community activities, and access essential services as many asylum seekers, despite their professional backgrounds, struggle with limited English skills upon arrival. Additionally, the availability of ESOL classes is limited, leading to long waiting times even when asylum seekers become eligible.

“The 6 month eligibility rule for asylum seekers to access AEB/combined authority funded ESOL provision is a significant barrier - they need to learn English straight away and not wait. I see no sense in having to wait 6 months to be able to join ESOL classes – why is this rule there? Also if they don’t have a residence ARC card because it has been delayed many providers won’t take them into provision. Learning English and getting qualifications is really important for future employment when they get their refugee status as well as helping with loneliness, depression, having a sense of purpose, integration etc. The current eligibility rules also cause issues later. While if they have refugee status, HP/Discretionary leave etc they and their family members are eligible for ESOL classes which is as it should be.”

Respondent 177

Respondents also pointed to regional disparities in ESOL provision. Relatedly, they identified the frequent movement of asylum seekers to different areas as contributing to the overall challenge of accessing ESOL. Frequent relocations can lead to major gaps in education as asylum seekers may have to join waiting lists for classes after moving.

Some respondents argued that even when refugees and asylum seekers are able to enrol in classes, they are likely to face inadequate provisions. Class hours are often not aligned with the needs of refugees, with many classes scheduled during working hours, potentially impeding their employment prospects. Equally, teachers are often unprepared to meet the needs of those with low literacy rates or special needs.

“Language is the primary barrier for refugees to access to services. In my view the current ESOL provisions are inadequate to serve communities with diverse needs. This is more apparent for refugees with very little or no previous education, low literacy rates or people with special needs such as dyslexia.”

Respondent 109

Further, respondents noted that informal ESOL classes often rely on volunteers and unqualified individuals to teach English, resulting in inadequate instruction and an inability to address learners’ specific needs effectively. Inadequate teaching impedes the language learning process, which in turn impedes access to education, employment, and integration.

“At the moment, it is expected that local governments would provide ESOL classes, courses and practice. This is not happening and where it does, it is offer as a casual and sometimes occasional opportunity delivered by people not always qualified to teach English, but rather relying on volunteers and native English speakers who lack the capability to identify learning difficulties, run a needs assessment or adjust language teaching materials to positively influence the language learning process urgently needed for refugees and asylum seekers.”

Respondent 145

3.1.2. Solutions

Proposed solutions in this area reflected the urgent need to provide accessible, consistent, expert-led English language education for these vulnerable populations to ensure successful integration and access to opportunities in the UK.

Respondents primarily offered practical solutions, focused on finding ways to offer more equitable and timely access to ESOL classes, taking into account the unique circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees. For instance, respondents suggested offering free courses upon arrival for all (getting rid of the 6-month waiting period for asylum seekers), as well as enhancing ESOL tutor recruitment, and increasing the number and timings of ESOL classes.

Some gave very specific recommendations, such as restoring ESOL support to its previous levels of funding. These respondents argued that recent cuts have significantly reduced training for ESOL teachers and course provisions. Several overlapping responses recommended centralising English language teaching, coordinating ESOL education nationally, and creating a standardised ESOL programme.

“Create a standardised ESOL programme that can provide asylum seekers and refugees the motivation and tools to develop the language to an acceptable level to facilitate integration. The local government should count on the resources to provide daily English language classes and attendance should be controlled, assessed and used as part of the feedback necessary to reinforce other opportunities for integration where the language could become a barrier.”

Respondent 145

Others suggested providing more varied pathways for refugees to develop professional, vocational, or industry-specific English. This could involve widening access to proficiency tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Occupational English Test (OET), which has been shown to significantly improve employability outcomes and support entry into specific professions such as medicine.

“IRC UK clients have also raised the need for more pathways for refugees to develop professional, vocational, or industry-specific English. Widening access to proficiency tests for these – such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Occupational English Test (OET) – would increase employability outcomes. These qualifications are, for example, necessary to enter the medical profession.”

Respondent 30

Some looked beyond the classroom, calling for more diverse opportunities to facilitate English language learning, such as through language exchange with the local residents or volunteering opportunities.

“Volunteering opportunities need to be organised and supported so that Afghan individuals can understand how life works here, practice their English and gain skills ready for future employment.”

Respondent 159

3.2. Education

Respondents described complex challenges for education. Notably, they suggested that asylum seekers, refugees, and specific groups faced different difficulties related to education.

3.2.1. Challenges

For asylum seekers, respondents indicated that eligibility, long wait times, and accessibility are major impediments to education access. Asylum seekers face long waiting times for asylum decisions, during which time they have no access to higher education.

For refugees (who are eligible for higher education), respondents identified numerous bureaucratic hurdles, such as delays in obtaining biometric cards which can prevent refugees from enrolling in schools or accessing employment, and delays in school allocation, often due to a lack of capacity, which can deprive children of education and expose them to potential exploitation or abuse.

“Improve the speed with which a refugee can obtain a biometric card. We were involved with a refugee who claimed asylum in October 2018 and did not receive their biometric card until over two years later (in 2021). This young man was waiting to study and to work and could do neither until his biometric card arrived.”

Respondent 147

Refugees may also struggle to have qualifications from their home countries recognised, limiting their access to employment and higher education.

“Impact of previous study and equivalent or lower qualification (ELQ) rules on refugee students, prevents access to student finance and progressing into Higher Education, impacting integration and progressing career goals.”

Respondent 29

Responses noted that children, who are eligible for mainstream schooling regardless of their status, may face financial and other constraints that nonetheless prevent them from accessing education services.

“Currently the Home Office is moving asylum seekers to hotel accommodation in areas where services are already overstretched without consulting local authorities. In some cases, such as Redbridge where we represent a number of asylum seekers, there are children who cannot go to school because there are not school places available – and meagre asylum support funds mean that people cannot afford to take public transport to go to school in a different borough. Given that hotel stays are often over a year, this is extremely concerning.”

Respondent 32

One significant obstacle facing children entering mainstream education identified by respondents is the fact that the National Free School Meal Eligibility Checking Service frequently fails to accurately identify eligible children, creating additional obstacles to accessing essential support.

“The National Free School Meal Eligibility Checking Service does not work. It shows children who are eligible as ineligible so so so often, and I spend so much time trying to convince the LEA to give FSM to children who are literally eligible. If the government could care enough to fix this, that would be super (or, you know, the bare minimum.)”

Respondent 190

Respondents also noted that refugee and asylum-seeking children may also face hostile school environments, racism, and/or bullying, which affects their well-being and integration. Respondents also reported a lack of wellbeing support for young students.

“A lot of racist and bullying behaviour in schools... Lack of support for children needs either it’s educational or mental [sic].”

Respondent 57

All groups face bureaucratic, financial, and informational barriers. Bureaucratic barriers include complex admission forms and language-related challenges, which hinder refugees and asylum seekers from accessing education and services. Schools and authorities often assume that they can navigate paperwork and understand the education system independently.

“Language and education barriers. It is assumed that they can complete forms, apply on-line and even speak over the phone or read complex documents of their own accord.”

Respondent 145

Reported financial difficulties stem from restrictions on access to student loans, work (for asylum seekers), having no recourse to public funds (those whose asylum claims are denied), or being designated as international students (and therefore subject to higher fees than “home students”). These may limit individuals’ ability to afford school uniforms, classroom materials, and/or higher education fees, which can have long-lasting impact on their careers and mental health.

Third sector respondents in particular posited many asylum seekers and refugees are unaware of the educational opportunities available to them, whether due to a lack of appropriate communication by service providers, a lack of support around how to find information about education, language barriers, or other challenges. This lack of awareness can lead to missed opportunities for education, training, and personal development.

3.2.2. Solutions

Respondents proposed solutions that called first and foremost for the equitable treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, promoting their equal access to education, including higher education.

Many solutions were practical. For instance, some respondents suggested streamlining processes for recognising and accrediting qualifications acquired abroad or granting immediate access to free education upon arrival.

“Refugees should have free access to education from the moment they arrive in the UK and not have to wait. Education can enable them to learn English and key skills to engage and participate in the community ultimately contributing to the economy. Refugees should be welcome, comfortable and engaged.”

Respondent 199

There was also broad call amongst respondents for greater financial investment in schools and support programmes, coupled with more scholarships and increased funding for higher education. Greater investment, they argued, is crucial to addressing capacity issues, ensuring the quality of education, and creating equitable access.

“Increasing funding for higher education for vulnerable young people.”

Respondent 13

“We need more scholarships for asylum and refugees also as we have Afghan, Hong Kong, Syrian, Ukrainian and other minorities ethnicities refugees also by giving them 2, or 3 scholarship it’s a joke. More scholarships for asylum and refugees for every ethnicity.”

Respondent 57

There was also broad call amongst respondents for greater financial investment in schools and support programmes, coupled with more scholarships and increased funding for higher education. Greater investment, they argued, is crucial to addressing capacity issues, ensuring the quality of education, and creating equitable access.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of communication around educational challenges. To this point, they suggested including refugees and asylum seekers in decision-making bodies (e.g., school boards, local councils), raising awareness among policymakers about the challenges related to accessing education, creating compassionate and understanding school environments, and offering more guidance and support for parents and caregivers to understand the local education system.

“Representation from people who have come as refugees in the decision-making bodies of that community: e.g., schools, councils etc.”

Respondent 115

Overall, respondents proposed a comprehensive set of solutions to address the diverse educational needs of refugees, ranging from those with limited prior education to academic professionals, and support the integration of asylum seekers and refugees into the education system.

3.3. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and Education

Respondents were keenly aware that UASC face specific challenges, many of which they traced back to the frame through which UASC are approached. They argued that UASC are viewed and treated first and foremost as asylum seekers and do not receive tailored care and consideration as children. This has significant effects on the ways in which UASC are treated during the integration process and the kind of support they receive.

3.3.1. Challenges

Specifically, respondents pointed to problems related to age assessment, access, and waiting times. UASC are often stuck in a prolonged period of temporary protection, which leaves many young individuals in a state of uncertainty about their future in the UK. They may face traumatic age assessments which may be invasive and potentially retraumatising. Assessment tools for UASC, such as the strengths and difficulties questionnaire, are not tailored to the unique circumstances of asylum-seekers and especially fail to address their mental health needs. There is a lack of timely and adequately trained mental health support (including in schools), with long waiting lists for mainstream mental health services, further impeding the integration process.

Respondents also noted a lack of comprehensive school support. This includes academic support and language instruction. This results in academic difficulties, which has long-term implications for continuing education and work.

“Children tend not to be given language or other additional support, especially those who arrive into secondary school. This means that they struggle to achieve.”

Respondent 202

This also includes emotional support. UASC often have unique vulnerabilities and needs stemming from traumatic experiences in their home countries and during their journeys. For instance, many UASC experience depression, insomnia, loneliness, anxiety, and PTSD, compounded by worries about their families back home, as described by respondents. Those needs may not be recognised or, if recognised, may not be address with age-appropriate, trauma-informed strategies or tools.

“Fail to be properly considered in their specific vulnerabilities and needs by local care authorities, including sequential traumatisation due to many adverse experiences in their origin countries or on their journeys, multiple experiences of loss, and cultural and religious specificities. The expectation that care can be offered under the same umbrella services that cater to British-born minors is unrealistic and results in poor practice.”

Respondent 13

Indeed, one respondent described the current asylum system, especially for unaccompanied children, as “not fit for purpose”:

“For unaccompanied children arriving in the UK, the current UK asylum system is simply not fit for purpose and has become less protecting, less caring, and more cruel. The system increasingly disregards “the best interests of children”, as the international and UK-ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child demands. It is focused on compliance, not on care.”

Respondent 13

3.3.2. Solutions

Key proposed solutions include recognising the eventual entitlement to protection of UASC despite initial negative decisions. Others proposed included granting legal status to all UASC.

Some respondents noted a systematic disbelief of young people’s testimony due perhaps to lack of training in understanding the impact of trauma and mental health challenges on young people’s capacity to present their story coherently and consistently. To this point, they proposed verifying stories by reaching out to relatives on the ground.

“At The Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile, 68% of the young people we currently see received a negative first decision. But today 83% have been granted some form of protection – after many years of fighting disbelief and appealing wrong decisions. The first area of improvement is to question why these young people did not receive protection when they first applied, since they were eventually recognized to be entitled to it. Wrong age-assessments, systemic disbelief of young people’s testimony, lack of training in understanding the impacts of trauma and mental health on young people’s capacity to present their story coherently and consistently... all are areas that should be improved.”

Respondent 13

Some respondents suggested a reform of age assessment procedures, namely by changing the criteria for adulthood to “significantly over 25” instead of “significantly over 18”. This suggestion seeks to address the frequent mis-categorisation of UASC as adults due to incorrect age assessments. Respondents argue that UASC are often assumed to be older than their years due to difficult life experiences. Note that this is not a call to raise the legal age of adulthood.

Others recommended creating dedicated guardianship services for UASC in order to safeguard their rights and wellbeing, for instance by placing UASC in suitable families or boarding schools. Relatedly, some respondents outlined plans for a foster placement system. Their proposed model featured rescue homes managed by former asylum seekers who can empathise with UASC and could provide supportive and relatable environments. A national campaign, akin to that for Ukrainians, could be instrumental in recruiting more foster carers and social workers and thus mitigating the shortages that delays UASC transfers within the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).

The Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile, which works exclusively with young people, called for a child-centred system inspired by the Barnahus model (also known as the Children’s Houses or Child Advocacy Centres model).⁹ The Barnahaus model emphasises a care-focused environment, providing specialised support and safety tailored to the unique challenges faced by UASC upon arrival.

3.4 Compounding Factors

Respondents pointed out that some refugees and asylum seekers, including women and those with diverse learning needs, may face additional vulnerabilities or barriers that impede their access to ESOL and education.

3.4.1. Challenges

Some respondents noted that women refugees are more likely to be impacted by domestic violence, poverty, childcare availability, and a prior lack of education. Others described the current lack of adequate assessment and support for refugees and asylum seekers with special needs, such as dyslexia.

For example, it is not possible to get dyslexia assessment in schools for refugee children as these tests are for English speakers only. Similarly, children with special needs do not have access to services in the absence of previous assessments in their country.”

Respondent 109

3.4.2. Solutions

Respondents primarily proposed new procedures and structures to better support vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers. For instance, some respondents suggested creating family-friendly ESOL classes and offering childcare support to ESOL students. Both solutions could make ESOL courses more accessible to refugee women, especially single parents.

Respondents also called generally for greater awareness and understanding of potential additional barriers to ESOL and education.

“There is a serious attempt made to understand the particular issues facing women refugees once settled including the impact of violence against women and girls, poverty and lack of education.”

Respondent 5

Employment and Entrepreneurship



Employment is crucial to integration as it enables income generation and economic independence, as well as opportunities for building social connections, cultivating language competences, and taking on valued social roles. Voluntary work can also provide work experience and, again, the chance to build social connections and develop language competences and is available to those with and without the right to paid work. For those with the right to paid work, volunteering can provide a pathway to employment.

Respondents highlighted employment and labour market integration as one of the most pressing integration challenges for refugees and asylum seekers. Nearly 15% of respondents from public sector and 30% from third sector identified the absence of right to work for asylum seekers. However, more public sector respondents (30%) mentioned other areas of labour market integration, while third sector respondents were more likely to refer primarily to the right to work.

Notably, many respondents argued that tackling the work-related challenges for refugees and asylum seekers will help to address labour and skills shortages in the UK as a whole. Supporting refugees and asylum seekers to enter into the labour market would not only grant them greater independence and less reliance on benefits, but also likely fill gaps and shortages in the UK labour landscape.

4.1. Right to Work

The right to work emerged as a key theme across multiple strands of evidence gathered by the Commission. The majority of respondents to the Call for Evidence supported granting asylum seekers' right to work after a period of three to six months, while a minority supported immediate access to the labour market for asylum seekers.

4.1.1. Challenges

Respondents emphasised that the right to work is not simply about whether one is able to work or not. Rather, it is a far-reaching issue that affects all aspects of asylum seekers' lives and future prospects. Being denied access to employment may not only drive asylum seekers into destitution but also deprives them of financial independence and sense of security. Lack of income may prevent asylum seekers from accessing critical paid services, such as GP and other healthcare, ESOL courses, social interactions, and any other activities that require the use of public transportation.

Furthermore, respondents argued that a lack of access to employment is detrimental to asylum seekers' dignity and can be detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing, which have already been disrupted by displacement and persecution. A lack of access to employment (and therefore income) additionally impacts asylum seekers' ability to address their physical and mental health needs, which would require personal funds or further public spending on service provision.

Notably, many respondents argued that tackling the work-related challenges for refugees and asylum seekers will help to address labour and skills shortages in the UK as a whole. Supporting refugees and asylum seekers to enter into the labour market would not only grant them greater independence and less reliance on benefits, but also likely fill gaps and shortages in the UK labour landscape.

Overall, many respondents made explicit links between access to employment and long-term integration outcomes, especially around questions of self-determination, self-sufficiency, and mental health.

“For individuals who often face lengthy wait times in the asylum system – at the end of 2022, over 40,000 people had been waiting for between one and three years – being unable to work exacerbates other challenges and limits opportunities for integration. For instance, many asylum seekers experience poverty – the state allowance is only £5.84 per day, while an extended period of uncertainty, worry and boredom can contribute to mental health issues. Importantly, the prohibition severely limits opportunities for integration since having a job enables new arrivals to practice language skills and build social and professional networks.”

Respondent 30

“I had been a photo journalist in Libya but didn’t know how to start up my career in the UK, especially as I didn’t have any access to English classes and was very aware that my communication was not that of an academic/professional. It has been hard for me to find employment and this has meant my confidence and sense of self-worth have been low, leading to depression.”

Respondent 40

4.1.2. Solutions

Respondents emphasised giving asylum seekers the right to work after a three to six month waiting period. (A small number proposed that asylum seekers should be granted right to work upon arrival.)

“Allow the right to work - Allowing asylum seekers the right to work after 6 months of residency would enable a sense of belonging and direction to be provided, and integration to be better achieved.”

Respondent 2

Some respondents further recommended that asylum seekers be able to find occupations that were not on the Shortage Occupation List and to access apprenticeships to develop their skills.

4.2. Legal Barriers to Access to Employment

Respondents identified a range of other legal barriers that impede asylum seekers’ access to employment and that may also affect refugees who have been granted the right to work. Notably, these cases were mainly witnessed and reported by third sector respondents who work closely with refugees and asylum seekers.

4.2.1. Challenges

Some third sector respondents described major administrative delays. For instance, one respondent recalled a case in which a refugee did not receive their biometric residence permit (BRP) card for more than two years after being granted asylum, which hindered them from accessing work and education.

“We were involved with a refugee who claimed asylum in October 2018 and did not receive their biometric card until over two years later (in 2021). This young man was waiting to study and to work and could do neither until his biometric card arrived.”

Respondent 147

Others noted that recent changes to Right to Work checks mean that refugees can no longer prove their right to work with a physical BRP card but must do so through an online procedure, which is often inaccessible for refugees seeking employment. In some cases, this may cause refugees to lose employment opportunities and necessitate their continued reliance on Universal Credit.

“Change in right to work checks – BRPs no longer valid RTW document, individuals must obtain share code (often not possible). Employers don’t provide alternatives therefore lost employment opportunities and confidence in the system, leading to more reliance on UC.”

Respondent 29

One respondent pointed out that the absence of physical evidence of ‘section 3C leave’ has led some individuals to lose jobs and education opportunities or struggle with finding employment.

“Section 3C leave – when someone with limited leave to remain makes an application for settlement, their rights are upheld until a decision has been made, however with no formal way of evidencing this, many lose jobs, struggle to find employment, lose access to higher education etc.”

Respondent 29

4.2.2. Solutions

Respondents suggested two complementary solutions: policy change and additional support. While policy changes can be a direct solution to address legal and structural barriers, such as the right to work or means to prove one’s right to work, additional support is also needed to improve refugees’ and asylum seekers’ access to employment. In other words, many respondents suggested that before and during the move-on period, newly recognised refugees should be informed and offered guidance about employment opportunities and employment training.

4.3 Skills and Accreditation

4.3.1. Challenges

Many respondents from the third sector, as well as refugees and asylum seekers, identified the inefficient accreditation system as a major hurdle to accessing employment. Even after obtaining the right to work, refugees may struggle to prove educational and professional records that they previously accumulated in their home countries. Without such records, they often end up receiving re-training or getting caught up in a lengthy accreditation procedure that takes a great amount of time and cost and disrupts their career paths.

“I was a doctor in China and it took me a long time to find a route into employment. I want to register with the GMC and practice as a doctor again but it is a long process and there is a long waiting list for help. The support I get from the CHC and from RAGU to study OET English and get ready to take my PLABs to be able to pass GMC registration is excellent, but it is a long journey and very expensive. [...] I find it hard to understand why there is not more help for me to requalify as a doctor, when I know the NHS needs professionals. I love my career and just want to contribute to British society.”

Respondent 44

While policy changes can be a direct solution to address legal and structural barriers, such as the right to work or means to prove one’s right to work, additional support is also needed to improve refugees’ and asylum seekers’ access to employment.

4.3.2. Solutions

Respondents recommended streamlining the accreditation process. They argued that finding ways to utilise the expertise refugees bring to the UK will help to ameliorate the country's serious skills and labour shortages. Specifically, respondents suggested strengthening the coordination between the government, accreditation authorities and the business sector to simplify the accreditation process and increase comparability for qualifications.

“Many of IRC’s clients have arrived in the UK with professional qualifications and are eager to return to their chosen career path but experience barriers in having their credentials recognised. One way the government could support this would be to facilitate greater coordination and communication between accreditation initiatives, professional bodies, the private sector, and the national agency for qualifications and skills (UK ENIC), which delivers statements of comparability for qualifications.

This would not only support refugees in finding employment but could help with gaps in sectors with skills shortages”

Respondent 30

4.4. Employability and the Labour Market

In addition to removing bureaucratic and administrative barriers, respondents suggested that increasing the employability of individual refugees would improve their labour market integration. Refugees may face difficulty obtaining and securing employment due to a lack of certain skills or competences, such as digital skills, English proficiency, financial resources, job search skills, understanding of the UK labour market and trainings. Respondents noted that this is often particularly an issue for women refugees, who may not have a linear or comprehensive educational background and often take on greater domestic responsibilities.

4.4.1. Challenges

Some respondents noted the importance of building skills for refugees and asylum seekers, such as learning English for business or other job-specific purposes, and again noted challenges refugees and asylum seekers face in accessing ESOL courses.

Others suggested that volunteering can provide importance opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to build work skills and experience. However, these respondents further noted that refugees face many of the same hurdles accessing volunteer work as they do accessing employment.

“Not able to use their skills even in a voluntary capacity because of DBS difficulties e.g. fingerprint at police station”

Respondent 156

Beyond bureaucratic and policy-based hurdles, several respondents argued that refugees and asylum seekers may struggle to find training and work opportunities due to hostile or unwelcoming attitudes. Respondents noted that many employers are less likely to hire refugees due to biases or lack of necessary knowledge about right to work, which only compounds the challenge of securing employment in a tight labour market.

“Too often in the current ‘hostile’ environment, refugees and asylum seekers, with pending or undocumented rights to work for example, are missing out on access to vital preemployment skills training and other further education (apprenticeships/traineeships) opportunities, as providers are uncertain about status and rights, as are they themselves.”

Respondent 52

In addition to removing bureaucratic and administrative barriers, respondents suggested that increasing the employability of individual refugees would improve their labour market integration.

4.4.2. Solutions

Respondents offered a range of suggestions aimed at developing refugees' employability. Many proposed practical solutions, such as creating a skills training hub and/or offering trainings and coaching or mentoring services to support refugees in navigating the job search process. One respondent additionally proposed offering training around financial education, such as budgeting. Another suggested that government work closely with the business sector to co-design appropriate training for refugees.

Other proposed increasing cross-actor and cross-sector communication and coordination between the public, private, and third sector organisations. In this vein, some respondents called for the enhanced role and capacity of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Jobcentre, and local authorities in assisting refugees' labour market integration, which would require additional funding and training for such institutions.

“Building the capacity of the Department of Work and Pensions and its Jobcentre Plus network to deliver more inclusive and personalised support for refugees from various types of professional backgrounds would also facilitate faster labour market integration.”

Respondent 30

Others, especially respondents from the third sector, highlighted the need for greater recognition and funding support for their work as key supporters of refugee job searching and employability.

“Consistent funding is required for local authorities to maintain services so as to provide training and support for people to get into the workplace.”

Respondent 115

One respondent noted that non-governmental support bodies often lack an understanding of some career elements such as entrepreneurship and fail to provide a full range of support, signalling that the employment/career support structure needs to be updated and reformed for such organisations.

Another recommended that voluntary sector bodies refine their recruitment policies to hire more refugees as staff members. This would allow for more opportunities for work for refugees and, importantly, put those who are most impacted by service provisioning at the centre of the planning and implementation process.

“Many charities end up making a lot of assumptions and the services, campaigns, and conversations sometimes take place without ever having any feedback from the target population, people with lived experience of UK migration and asylum system. Voluntary sector should have more equitable recruitment policies so that people with lived experience can pursue their leadership journey in the sector by becoming a staff member in the charities. To change this, many charitable organisations engage in coproduction projects and establish Experts by Experience groups from people who are using their services or benefiting from their campaigns. It is crucial that people who are at the receiving end of policies must feel empowered to engage with the service, policy, or system, and to become leaders of the conversations that are about them, and coproduction is a great way to achieve this when it is done in a meaningful manner. However, regardless of the genuine efforts in bringing Experts by Experience groups into coproducing services and activities, we believe there is an undeniable institutional power that sits in the charitable organisations, especially in their senior management and leadership teams, where the actual decision-making is taking place. In order to truly shift the power to Experts by Experience, we believe it is essential to improve the representation of people with lived experience in these teams.”

Respondent 24

Social Inclusion



Social inclusion refers to how involved and included refugees and asylum seekers are in the communities in which they have been settled, which ultimately affects how integrated they become. Social inclusion is understood to be the ability to feel safe, respected, accepted, have a sense of belonging, and a network of meaningful connections. Social inclusion thus refers to the cultivation, maintenance, and strengthening of social connections, as well as the extent to which refugees and asylum seekers feel part of British society, both on arrival and over time. Social inclusion,

5.1. Social Bonds

Social bonds refer to connections between individuals with a shared sense of identity– such as ethnicity, faith or national background.¹² Refugees and asylum seekers responding to the Call for Evidence highlighted the importance of strong intra-communal social bonds. Many respondents saw such bonds as highly positive forces; they offered sources of emotional support, information, and shared resources, feelings of belonging, solidarity, and security, and offered protection against loneliness and isolation.

Social inclusion is crucial not only to social integration, but also to facilitating individual and collective access to resources. When people form trusting, reciprocal relationships, they are enabled to use and exchange resources and to develop a sense of belonging.

like integration, is a dynamic multi-directional process that includes both new arrivals and the host society, as well as third sector organisations, civil society, public discourse, and policy. Specific challenges face single women, women with children, disabled asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, LGBTQIA+, and other groups with protected characteristics.

Social inclusion is crucial not only to social integration, but also to facilitating individual and collective access to resources. When people form trusting, reciprocal relationships, they are enabled to use and exchange resources and to develop a sense of belonging.¹⁰ At the same time, however, social networks can reinforce existing divisions and inequities based on uneven access to power and/or resources.¹¹ It is therefore critical that we address social inclusion as a nuanced process and consider power dynamics, resource distribution, and existing relations as part of social inclusion.

This section highlights the critical role of interpersonal relationships in defining, building, and achieving integration. Solutions and challenges in this section draw attention to possible pathways and existing gaps to better support the formation of meaningful social relationships amongst refugees, asylum seekers, and UK society.

5.1.1 Challenges

Although a number of refugees and asylum seekers responding to the Call for Evidence described using intra-communal networks to find housing or finding emotional support, others called attention to the potential pitfalls of such social bonds, particularly when they are not combined by social bridges across communities. They suggested that intra-communal bonds without wider connections, including to the host community, may lead to the stratification of social boundaries along communal lines and thereby undermine efforts to integrate into UK society more broadly.

“Having one’s own community (good to have support to likeminded people and peers but at the same time this creates isolation and segregation in-between communities).”

Respondent 140,

Importantly, some refugees and asylum seekers responding to the Call for Evidence indicated that certain policies and practices impede the formation of social bonds, whether by placing asylum seekers in isolated locales, dispersing asylum seekers at short notice, or failing to provide support for community organisations.

“I am scared about the future. I don’t want to be sent back to Sudan or a new place in England. My friend was in the hostel one day and then he sent away to North England. We are both very sad. I miss my mother and worry as she is alone after my father was killed. I get bad night dreams and sometimes get very angry. I miss my mother cooking and hate the waiting for my life to start. But I know I need to learn better English and then hope my life will start and I can help my mother.”

Respondent 45

Some respondents also pointed to the precarity that can sometimes come from over-reliance on social bonds with other refugees and asylum seekers, especially when such small-scale networks are disrupted through dispersal, making it harder to integrate into the local community. The reliance on grassroots support for new arrivals can also lead to tensions with the host community, especially in areas that already struggle with under-resourcing:

The reliance on grassroots support for new arrivals can also lead to tensions with the host community, especially in areas that already struggle with under-resourcing

“Too often, this is compounded by locating the refugees or asylum seekers in areas that geographically and/ or economically – are least able to offer integration support. Contrarily, the situation of placing refugee and asylum-seeking individuals in these often ‘run down’ UK towns/ areas, directly conflicts with the intent of humanitarian relief, sparking hostility and tension from local populations who see themselves in competition for the same limited resources or services.”

Respondent 52

5.1.2 Solutions

Respondents offered a range of potential solutions to enhance opportunities to build social bonds for new arrivals.

First, many described the importance of supporting refugees and asylum seekers in forming peer-to-peer networks, which can act as sources of support and information and reinforce meaningful social bonds.

Relatedly, respondents noted that formal spaces of encounter, such as community organisations and orientation sessions, are critical to connecting refugees and asylum seekers.

“Community organisations are vital – orientation sessions are very important, so people are aware of what’s on offer. Many people just go through system and don’t have support. Need opportunities to meet people, people need confidence to speak out.”

Respondent 15

Some public and third sector actors gave examples of strategies employed by their organisations to facilitate connections amongst refugees and asylum seekers. For example, Southwark Council in London described their initiative to support local refugee and asylum seeker communities through communal meals. In 2021, the chair of the British Afghan Society, a local chef and nutritionist, the Southwark public health team, Southwark Council, Community Southwark, and Southwark Food Action Alliance collaborated to organise a communal meal for recently arrived Afghan refugees in the Southwark area. The event was positively received by attendees and further similar events were arranged in subsequent years.

5.2. Social Bridges

Social bridges are connections amongst people of different backgrounds. Establishing meaningful social relations with those of different linguistic, ethnic, religious, or other backgrounds or identities is central to the interactional nature of most definitions of integration. Building bridges across diverse communities supports social cohesion, opens up new educational and economic opportunities, and provides new routes for resource sharing. In contrast, social segregation is marked by a lack of social bridges (though social bonds may be present within a socially segregated group of people).

5.2.1. Challenges

Respondents outlined a number of impediments to building social bridges. Refugees, asylum seekers, and third and public sector actors all called attention to negative public discourse, misinformation, and a lack of cultural awareness circulating within British society that both discourage refugees and asylum seekers from engaging beyond their communities and prevent local Brits from welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. The “hostile environment” in the UK was referenced by Call respondents across all sectors. Lived experience respondents in particular reported feeling isolated, fearful, and uneasy as a result of UK public discourse and opinion around refugees and asylum seekers, which posed a challenge to social inclusion.

“There is misunderstanding within parts of the public of what the term refugee actually means. The clear distinction of someone who has been granted protection from danger. The misuse of language and terminology that politicians and the media are often guilty of, can stoke anger and confusion within communities where those who are not British are seen as ‘illegal’ economic migrants who are putting strain on local services. This can create the space for hostility to build up in the local communities and dramatically effects the positive integration of refugees into British society.”

Respondent 29

“Three previous Home Secretaries have each committed to making Channel crossings by small boat ‘unviable’. This presents asylum-seekers as a threat which must be ‘deterred’ and introduces the notion of ‘legitimate’ and ‘bogus’ asylum seekers. This criminalisation of refugees and asylum-seekers makes it much harder for them to integrate, as they will be automatically viewed with suspicion.”

Respondent 138

Some respondents noted that experiences of or fears regarding xenophobia and hate crime can lead refugees and asylum seekers to limit the extent to which they reached out to other communities, including for housing and work:

“There is misunderstanding within parts of the public of what the term refugee actually means. The clear distinction of someone who has been granted protection from danger. The misuse of language and terminology that politicians and the media are often guilty of, can stoke anger and confusion within communities where those who are not British are seen as ‘illegal’ economic migrants who are putting strain on local services. This can create the space for hostility to build up in the local communities and dramatically effects the positive integration of refugees into British society.”

Call for Evidence Respondent 29

“My research found that experiencing hate crime or even just the fear of being targeted for refugees and new migrants was enough for them to minimise their engagement with the wider community and limit their opportunities to seek better/more appropriate housing and jobs if they were outside of their communities for fear of victimisation. Instead, these communities often self-segregated for support and safety.”

Respondent 162

Relatedly, refugees and asylum seekers reported experiencing a lack of interest in forming connections – and even suspicion – by British locals:

“People in the UK were also very suspicious of Libyans and no one was interested in anything to do with our culture or country beyond the political issues.”

Respondent 40

Respondents posited that some of these challenges are exacerbated by media portrayals and political discourse. Third sector actors pointed to tensions fomented by poor media representation and political rhetoric that led British locals to oppose the presence of refugees and asylum seekers in their areas, to see them as “illegal” migrants, and to perceive them as a source of competition for scarce economic, health, and other resources. According to such responses, refugee and asylum seeker communities are acutely aware of this hostility and, fearing for their security and feeling unwelcome, may turn inward in response.

“When the media report on hotels being used to house asylum-seekers, it provides local residents a focal point to target their opposition. This stigmatises asylum seekers and makes it impossible for them to feel safe and welcomed by the community.”

Respondent 138

Structural factors also cause impediments to the formation of social bridges. For instance, some third sector actors indicated that limited support and lack of security for asylum seekers leads to high rates of housing precarity and poverty, reducing their capacity to build social connections:

“Low rates of asylum support, forcing people into poverty and reducing their capacity to build connections in their new home.”

Respondent 21

Third sector and public respondents also identified language barriers as an impediment to social bridge building. They further identified a lack of availability of ESOL classes for refugees, including limited providers and long waiting times for classes, and the lack of access to ESOL classes for asylum seekers (within the first 6 months), as exacerbating this issue. Further, respondents pointed to the fact that ESOL provision does not necessarily result in integration on its own, and needs to occur in tandem with wider efforts to promote a sense of community and to build social bonds across communities:

“The local government provides two or three classes per week but does not contribute to the opportunities to create a sense of integration among refugees and asylum seekers with other communities.”

Respondent 145

Respondents pointed to the fact that higher education and employment can support interaction and relationship building amongst a diverse group of people. Thus, asylum seekers’ lack of access to Higher Education and work impedes the possibility of social bridge building.

Respondents pointed to the fact that higher education and employment can support interaction and relationship building amongst a diverse group of people. Thus, asylum seekers’ lack of access to Higher Education and work impedes the possibility of social bridge building.

“Integration is a big word, as an asylum seeker I can’t access higher education even when I have all the requirements to do so, even to get a volunteering job is very difficult as we can barely get a DBS check.

What can we do to help and participate to the development of our communities?”

Respondent 149

Third sector actors also highlighted the impact of accommodation practices and access on social bridge building. Dispersal of asylum seekers, which often occurs at short notice, is highly disruptive and can uproot individuals from burgeoning social connections. Refugees and asylum seekers often rely on small social networks for support, and the practice of dispersing them to different areas can disrupt these connections, making it harder to integrate into the local community. Additionally, accommodation in hotels, camps, and detention centres can isolate refugees and asylum seekers from local populations.

“They fuel concerns around community cohesion, leading to the use of inappropriately situated or inappropriate types of accommodation that restricts access to communities and creates barriers to integration.”

Respondent 26

Overall, these responses alluded to key opportunities for encounter and exchange with and contribution to local populations that are stymied by policy, under resourcing, or harmful discourse.

5.2.2 Solutions

Respondents identified a range of potential solutions geared towards facilitating important spaces, contexts, and opportunities for exchange and encounter with locals.

Many called for changes in attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers amongst British locals. Suggested strategies include more positive media coverage, supporting community activities that bring British locals and refugees and asylum seekers together, raising awareness about the experiences of and challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees, and creating opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to learn about British life and for local British people to learn about other cultures, histories, and lifestyle.

“There should be both opportunities for refugees to learn about British culture but also reciprocal opportunities for British people to learn about other cultures.”

Respondent 40

Respondents across the board expressed a desire for greater empathy, understanding, and connection. However, the means for achieving these attitudinal changes was underdefined.

Respondents also offered a range of solutions to structural impediments to social bridges. Some respondents suggested improving asylum seeker accommodation and/or offering more community-based housing in order to create more opportunities for interaction. Others argued for allowing asylum seekers to work on arrival, which would provide economic opportunities as well as opportunities for socialising, language learning, and improved wellbeing. Refugees, asylum seekers, and third sector actors emphasised the importance of increasing access to ESOL classes and opportunities for language exchange.

Respondents across the board expressed a desire for greater empathy, understanding, and connection.

Faith and third sector actors, refugees, and asylum seekers also proposed activities that bring diverse people into contact, such as sporting events, afterschool activities and youth clubs for children, and cultural events:

“Working with Panjshir Aid, Southwark Law Centre and SRCF, Southwark Council also marked Refugee Week 2022 by running two refugee week events to welcome and celebrate refugees within our borough. It was very well received in the community and brought together various stakeholders. The main celebration event was held at St Giles Church on the 18th of June 2022, with approximately 300 people attending throughout the day. Several services ran information stalls and food and entertainment was provided by different refugee and migrant groups including performances by Bolivian dancers and a Ukrainian singer. The following week a football game was organised and attended by people from the bridging and asylum contingency hotels as well as local residents.”

Respondent 2

“To ensure successful integration, communities should be welcoming and inclusive, providing opportunities for refugees to engage in social and cultural activities and to connect with local people. Promoting community engagement and social inclusion: Encouraging community engagement and social inclusion can help refugees and asylum seekers feel more connected to their new communities and reduce feelings of isolation.”

Respondent 120

5.3 Social Links

Social links refer to people’s connections with institutions, such as government services or political processes. These include the ability to access and receive benefits provided by institutions, as well as to contribute to social institutions (for instance by voting). In contrast, a lack of social links characterises feelings of alienation.

5.3.1 Challenges

Respondents mostly highlighted structural challenges to social links. Some described the dispersal of asylum seekers to non-urban areas as impeding social links:

“And compared to the diversity of UK regions, communities are very far from the places of power.”

Respondent 140

Third sector actors called attention to a range of specific impediments, including challenging legal and bureaucratic hurdles to accessing services, as well as long wait times, overwhelming or unclear processes for refugees and asylum seekers seeking services, language barriers, complicated paperwork, lack of financial resources to travel to and from institutional locations, and incorrect advice or inaction by service workers.

“A lot of miss guidance [sic], staff have lack of knowledge to provide help, a lot of time I did complaints about Mears, nothing happened.”

Respondent 57

Others described experiences of hostility and stigma amongst public service providers, particularly in non-urban areas.

“For those members outside of London, experiences of hostility and stigma from the public, public services and the Home Office have been sadly frequent.”

Respondent 34

Some respondents suggested that refugees and asylum seekers may be hesitant to engage with government agencies, whether due to fear based on past experiences, feelings of hopelessness, or worries about their status.

Overall, respondents called attention to many interlinked structural problems that prevent refugees and asylum seekers from building positive relations with local and national institutions and, therefore, impede the formation of social links.

5.3.2 Solutions

Solutions in this area primarily emphasised the importance of a) creating new conditions and modes for exchange between refugees and asylum seekers and service providers and policy makers, and b) directly involving refugees and asylum seekers in policy design and decision-making processes in order to redress gaps in social links.

For instance, one respondent suggested creating a means by which refugees and asylum seekers can submit anonymous complaints about services and service providers without fear of reprisal. Others called for representation of refugees and asylum seekers on decision-making bodies, speaking to a burgeoning trend across policy and planning to involve those most impacted by a process or product in its design.¹³ Respondents also expressed a need for more direct engagement between politicians, local councils, and MPS, as well as third sector agencies, and refugees and asylum seekers.

Respondents also offered solutions for service providers. These include providing services in multiple languages and/or ensuring the availability of interpreters, organising events at which multiple agencies are present to answer questions and give advice, and offering or making compulsory training for any agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers focused on their experiences.

5.4 Compounding Factors

There are multiple factors that might compound the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in achieving social inclusion. Respondents to the Call for Evidence identified two major factors: gender and minor status. While all refugees and asylum seekers face challenges related to social inclusion, some groups may grapple with additional or specific challenges linked to their identities.

5.4.1 Challenges

Some respondents suggested that women may be less likely to be educated and more likely to face language barriers than their male counterparts, further impeding their ability to build social bridge and links.

“We cannot expect people to learn the language without support. Most people, particularly women have come from backgrounds of no early education in their own language.”

Respondent 14

A respondent from Together for Ipswich further noted that single mothers are likely to face multiple challenges related to childcare, living costs, and housing, which may increase their risks of social isolation, as well as homelessness.

“For the older women particularly, for whom learning English is a greater challenge, and for the lone mothers, who are the clear majority of our guests, it is unrealistic - almost impossible in fact - to expect that they can find jobs that will sustain rent payments, childcare and living cost.”

Respondent 152

Young people also face a number of unique barriers to integration on arrival in the UK compared to their older counterparts. For example, respondents from the Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile, a charity working exclusively with young asylum seekers, pointed out that young people face long wait times

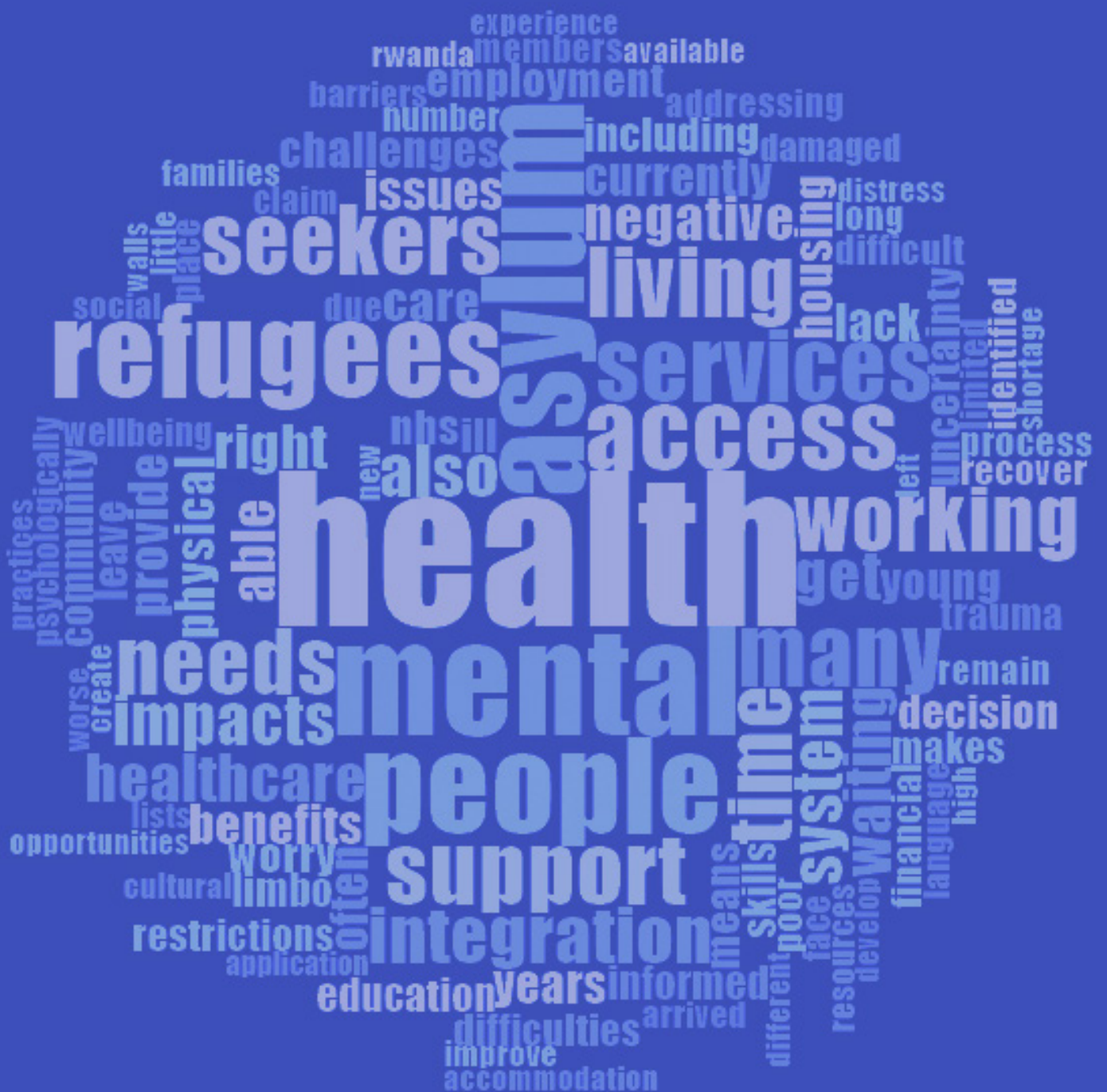
on their asylum claims (according to their submission, this can be up to 55 months from arrival in the UK) and must often contend with challenges in accessing education, especially higher education (for those who age into adulthood while awaiting decision), during that period. Educational institutions are critical sites for socialising and building social connections, of which young asylum seekers are being deprived.

5.4.2 Solutions

Solutions in this area focused on enhancing resourcing for asylum seeking processes. To address challenges faced by young people in particular, the Baobab Centre proposed that all asylum claims made by minors and young adults should be resolved within three months of the initial claim, preventing long wait times during which children and young adults may face uncertainties about their futures. They further

Some respondents suggested that women may be less likely to be educated and more likely to face language barriers than their male counterparts, further impeding their ability to build social bridge and links.

noted that many young people “receive temporary protection of up to 2.5 years, trapping them in cycles of uncertainty as to their future in the UK,” which impedes the formation of meaningful social connections as they wait in limbo. The Baobab Centre additionally called for greater funding for higher education for vulnerable young people.



Health and Mental Health



Health, mental health, and wellbeing are critical in and of themselves. From an integration perspective, good health supports participation in education, employment, and other activities central to integration. At the same time, integration supports improved health and wellbeing by facilitating access to services and even potentially directly improving mental health. Health, mental health, and wellbeing are therefore simultaneously indicators or positive ‘outcomes’ of integration, as well as means to support integration.

Long overlooked, the importance of mental healthcare access is now widely recognised, especially by public sector actors, healthcare providers, and refugees and asylum seekers. Nearly half of the public sector respondents to the Call for Evidence acknowledged mental health challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

Evidence collected by the Commission, especially from refugees, asylum seekers, and third sector groups, suggests that often the asylum process itself contributes to a deterioration of individuals’ mental and physical wellbeing. It is therefore crucial that we consider health, healthcare, and mental health as complex, multifaceted issues.

Overall, responses show that the current provision and accessibility of health and mental health services is impeding integration. Across demographics and sectors, respondents indicated the multiple overlapping and compounding factors that not only aggravate existing health and mental health conditions of refugees and asylum seekers, but actively degrade them. Such conditions hamper individuals’ ability rebuild not only physically and mentally, but also socially and financially.

6.1 Provision of Healthcare, Social Care, and Mental Health Services

6.1.1. Challenges

The greatest challenges identified in service provision were administrative incapacity, poor communication, and a lack of resources leading to long wait times for refugees and asylum seekers trying to access health services.

“There is not enough doctors or dentists for people who have lived here for many years, let alone the refugees that have arrived over the last 12 months.”

Respondent 119

Some services were noted as particularly lacking. Public and third sector actors and refugee and asylum seekers alike reported a notable lack of trauma-informed support amongst health and mental healthcare providers. They pointed to a dearth of training and awareness amongst providers, as well as a shortage of trained counsellors, particularly outside of urban areas. They also indicated a lack of appropriate translation services to support the provisioning of health and mental health care.

“Where mental health needs are identified, there is a severe dearth of mental health support – waiting lists for mainstream services are incredibly long (at least 6-12 months) and often therapists are not adequately trained or resourced to support asylum seekers and those with lower levels of English.”

Respondent 19

Evidence collected by the Commission, especially from refugees, asylum seekers, and third sector groups, suggests that often the asylum process itself contributes to a deterioration of individuals’ mental and physical wellbeing. It is therefore crucial that we consider health, healthcare, and mental health as complex, multifaceted issues.

6.1.2. Solutions

Refugee and asylum seeker voices highlighted the trauma they have and continue to face. Relatedly, third sector actors called for more training on trauma-informed approaches for health and mental healthcare providers, as well as for staff working directly with refugees and/or asylum seekers in other spaces, such as temporary accommodations.

“Members had mixed experiences of accessing health care in the UK, but all felt that timely and trauma-informed care was critical to integration. This care needs to be immediately available and culturally appropriate.”

Respondent 34

Third sector actors especially called attention to the need for refugee and asylum seeker children and UASC to have access to mental health services and for those working with them to be trained in providing trauma-informed support.

“A trauma-informed approach to all healthcare and support, with all staff working at in IACs given appropriate training to provide sensitive support for those who have experienced trauma.”

Respondent 2

6.2 Access to Healthcare, Social Care, and Mental Health Services

6.2.1. Challenges

According to responses to the Call for Evidence, refugees' and asylum seekers' access to services may be limited due to a range of factors, including language, cultural, financial, legal, and regional barriers. Respondents highlighted language barriers as both contributing to challenges in accessing to healthcare services and increasing social isolation, thereby exacerbating mental health difficulties.

“Accessing mental health services is also a problematical area. Language barrier is a problem, but cultural approaches to mental health can also be an issue.”

Respondent 109

They also noted cultural barriers. Identified cultural barriers included internal barriers, such as a lack of trust and stigma within some refugee and asylum seeker communities around mental health and care, and external barriers, such as experiences of racism, a lack of cultural awareness and competence amongst healthcare providers.

“Barriers exist from the system side (system not adapted to needs, not culturally competent/little awareness, lack of necessary resources (e.g. consultation times and settings, high quality interpretation) and from the service user side (not understanding the system, language barrier, not trusting, fear of charging/information sharing). Any integration programme requires a strong focus on identifying and overcoming barriers on both sides.”

Respondent 107

Relatedly, refugee and asylum seekers described experiences of being othered and looked down upon while trying to access provisioning. Such experiences negatively impacted their sense of empowerment and wellbeing.

“Lack of empowerment of asylum seekers and refugees. We were otherised and looked down upon, especially because of language and cultural barriers.”

Respondent 127

Financial hurdles limit refugees' and asylum seekers' access to health care. These include a lack of funds to travel to and from healthcare services, to debt accrued by undocumented individuals and asylum seekers who must pay for their own healthcare.

A key legal barrier highlighted by third sector actors and lived experience respondents was being left with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) for those who have been refused asylum and have exhausted their appeal rights. Individuals with NRPF are barred from access to most benefits, including NHS healthcare. While third sector respondents acknowledged their aim to support social, mental, and healthcare for individuals with NRPF, they also indicated that a lack of communication and coordination amongst groups may lead to prolonged inaction, causing detrimental health outcomes for those waiting for support.

“It is particularly hard for those with NRPF to get adult social care support and this can lead to detrimental health outcomes while various professionals and agencies argue back and forth over whose responsibility it is to support someone with care needs.”

Respondent 37

Respondents identified a major regional barrier: the dearth of available healthcare services outside of urban centres. Refugees and asylum seekers located outside of major cities may be forced to travel long distances to receive care, a journey which is impossible for some.

“Huge problems because no GP doctors and medical specialists in small communities”

Respondent 167

“Not having the funds to travel to and from the services that they are looking to use”

Respondent 7

Respondents also highlighted the lack of information about health and mental healthcare services available to refugees and asylum seekers. Beyond language barriers, they noted regular failures to communicate information in a timely manner, a lack of clear communication about the range of healthcare and

They also emphasised the need for increased cooperation amongst the Home Office, voluntary organisations, and agencies providing health services in order to address mistrust and other similar barriers. They especially noted the need for the Home Office and health services to listen to the concerns of voluntary sector organisations and their clients.

Public and third sector respondents alike called for more training for healthcare providers about migrant health, including cultural competence, as well as greater investment in interpreting services.

“Healthcare staff training and education, training of specialists in migrant health, investment in high quality interpreting services (e.g. through supporting non-for profit social enterprises), community of practice/network of enablers.”

Respondent 107

6.3 Impact of the Asylum System

6.3.1. Challenges

As was clear from Call for Evidence responses, the asylum process itself significantly impacts asylum seekers' mental health, compounding physical and mental health challenges experienced before or during migration. After arrival, detention and poor housing conditions can deteriorate individuals' physical

Respondents also emphasised the need for increased cooperation amongst the Home Office, voluntary organisations, and agencies providing health services in order to address mistrust and other similar barriers to accessing health and mental health services.

NHS services available depending on status, and a lack of clarity around healthcare fees and processes, such as how to register with a GP. Some refugee and asylum seekers even reported being refused care due to challenges with documentation (e.g. proof of address, identity documents) or stigma.

6.2.2. Solutions

The main suggestions in this theme came from third and public sector respondents. Third sector respondents noted an overreliance on charity and similar agencies to provide care for NRPF (as well as UASC and others) and called for increased funding and benefits, and clearer directions for refugee and asylum seeker care.

health. Mental wellbeing is affected throughout the asylum application process, during which individuals must wait for asylum decisions without the right to work, access to higher education, inadequate housing, social isolation, and exposure to negative political discourses. Mental health needs are often disregarded during assessments, which prevents asylum seekers from receiving necessary mental health support.

The lack of safe, habitable housing was a major topic of concern amongst third and public sector actors and refugees and asylum seekers. These respondents reported substandard accommodation that is detrimental to the physical health of asylum seekers. Refugees highlighted their concerns about and experiences of problems such as overcrowding, damp, and the lack of financial resources to heat one's home.

Detention was also noted as having a powerful negative impact on asylum seekers' physical and mental wellbeing. In detention centres, asylum seekers may face poor or dangerous living conditions, uncertainty, and increased risk of exploitation.

“We’ve seen the impact of living in detention on people’s physical and mental health, the emotional strain of being separated from family and the consequences of people living in destitution, including heightened risks of exploitation, and not being able to afford even the most basic of things, like food, shoes or toiletries.”

Respondent 9

Critically, waiting itself was identified as posing a risk to asylum seekers' mental and physical wellbeing, including waiting for appointments and access to services, waiting for asylum decisions, and waiting for family reunification. While waiting, asylum seekers must grapple with uncertainty and a lack of information about the asylum process, services, and their claims. Respondents argued that waiting can lead to feelings of despair, desperation, isolation, and helplessness, as well as potentially exacerbate existing health and mental health conditions.

“Another difficulty, could be long waiting time to receive the services which lead them to disappointment and becomes interconnected to their increased mental health issues of feeling helplessness.”

Respondent 125

6.3.2. Solutions

Refugees and asylum seekers called attention to the impact of waiting, poor accommodation, and inability to seek paid employment as being detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing.

Public and third sector actor both called for greater funding dedicated to health and mental health services. More funding would enable the development of a range of health-related areas and services and

strengthen the early stages of support so that refugees and asylum seekers are able to find appropriate accommodation and register with and access medical and financial support services more quickly.

Some public and third sector actors also called for improved assessment procedures so that individual needs and risks can be evaluated, and the necessary support provided.

6.4 Compounding Factors

Respondents highlighted compounding factors impacting the health and mental wellbeing of marginalised groups, namely women, children, and LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers.

6.4.1. Challenges

Third and public sector actors described increased barriers and risks women may face upon arrival, including the impact of violence against women and girls, a lack of education, and increased isolation. Others noted specific risks related to maternity health and period poverty.

Third sector actors noted the risks of poor accommodation to the health and mental health of LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers. In particular, inappropriate housing can impact safety and security, ability to build social connections, and access to services.

Third and public sector actors indicated a lack of appropriate accessibility testing for children as well as a lack of and incomplete welfare checks for children. For instance, a representative from The Children's Society summarised their recent Distress Signals report, which indicates that commonly used assessment tools for identifying unaccompanied minors' needs for mental health support regularly fail to adequately identify mental health needs. In school settings, a lack of attention to the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children means that children may fail to receive necessary curricular, emotional, and social support.

Third sector actors noted the risks of poor accommodation to the health and mental health of LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers. In particular, inappropriate housing can impact safety and security, ability to build social connections, and access to services.

“There are problems with refugee children in school settings as they are placed in their peer groups and expected to follow the curriculum without understanding the context. We had incidents of extreme anxiety in children when they were told to take exams soon after their arrival when they had no understanding of the subjects.”

Respondent 109

6.4.2. Solutions

Third and public sector actors called for assessment and care practices that are tailored to the individual needs, risks, and circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly for those groups likely to face specific compounding factors.

Third sector actors proposed greater attention to the impact of parents’ situations on children; for instance, the ways in which a lack of appropriate accommodation impacts families which in turn impacts children’s physical and mental wellbeing.

Third sector actors also called for funding and structural support to expand the range of mental health supports available to refugees and asylum seekers. Examples included increased training for providers about specific risks and cultural competencies, as well as efforts at community building and the creation of safe spaces and social spaces that enable connection and counteract social isolation.

Annexe A

Call for Evidence Questionnaire

The independent Commission on the Integration of Refugees invites you to submit evidence on how the current refugee and asylum system affects refugees' integration into wider UK society.

Your evidence will be used to support the Commission's report and recommendations for changes to the way the UK processes and supports refugees and asylum seekers. The Commission hopes that these recommendations will be adopted by policy makers and will result in tangible changes to the current system.

We welcome submissions from people with diverse views and experiences, especially those with lived experience of being refugees or asylum seekers themselves. We also encourage submissions from integration service providers, refugee and asylum seeker experts, and the general public.

YOU CAN RESPOND TO AS MANY OR AS FEW OF THE QUESTIONS AS YOU LIKE.

Please respond to the questions in your own words. You can provide a longer response (of up to 1,000 words) or hyperlinks to relevant reports, research, or other published materials (along with appropriate page numbers) in the box at the end of the survey. You can submit evidence up until 31 March 2023.

First Name:

Organisation: (optional)

Gender: (optional)

Surname:

Age:

Do you identify as a refugee or asylum seeker in the UK? Yes No If yes, which of the following best describes your situation (optional):

I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain I am currently going through the UK asylum system (either awaiting an initial decision or at appeal stage)

I applied for asylum in the UK and currently have no recourse to public funds I came to the UK as part of a resettlement programme (including VPRS, CSS, ARAP, ACRS, Mandate Resettlement Scheme)

I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)

I came to the UK as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme Other (please specify)

Email:

Life in the UK as a Refugee

The Commission would like to find out about life in the UK for refugees and asylum seekers, and the communities hosting them.

- 1. As a refugee or asylum seeker yourself, what are the good things and what are the bad things about settling in the UK?**
- 2. What does refugee integration mean to you and what should communities look like where refugees are well integrated?**

Refugee and Asylum System

The Commission is interested in learning about how the structure of the UK refugee and asylum system affects the integration of refugees. This includes learning about the experiences and rights of refugees and asylum seekers who have applied for refugee status in the UK, as well as those who have travelled to the UK via a government resettlement scheme (including, but not limited to the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, UK Resettlement Scheme, Community Sponsorship Scheme, Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, Homes for Ukraine, Mandate Resettlement Scheme for family reunion, or visa adjustments for BN(O)).

The Commission would like to hear your views on the following:

- 1. How can we improve the overall refugee and asylum system to support the protection and integration of refugees and those granted other forms of humanitarian protection, and what special measures are needed for unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC)?**
- 2. How should these systems ensure the humane treatment of those asylum seekers who do not receive status?**

Local Integration Support

The Commission is interested in collecting evidence about the services available to support refugees at a local level. This includes learning about the work of local government, the voluntary sector, faith communities, business and the community in providing services for refugees and asylum seekers. It also includes looking into refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences of these services.

The Commission would like to hear your views on the following:

- 1. How could the central government, devolved governments, local government and the voluntary sector better coordinate their work to tackle the challenges of supporting refugee integration across the UK?**
- 2. What difficulties do asylum seekers and refugees face in accessing services (including but not limited to housing, education, training, healthcare, children's services and social services)?**
- 3. What challenges do organisations (in the public, private and third sector) face in providing services for refugees and asylum seekers (including but not limited to housing, education, training, healthcare, children's services and social services)?**
- 4. What actions are needed to overcome the challenges faced by refugees, asylum seekers and service providers?**

Public Opinion and Politics

The Commission wants to learn about the public perception of refugees and asylum seekers and how this affects the refugee experience. This includes learning about the ways that politicians and the media have talked about refugees and asylum seekers and why public debate in this area is often polarised.

The Commission would like to hear your views on the following:

- 1. How does the way that politicians, the media and the general public talk about refugees and asylum seekers affect refugees' ability to integrate into British society?**
- 2. Our preliminary findings have shown that integration policy has rarely been a political priority of the UK government. What can be done to put integration at the heart of government policy on refugees and asylum seekers?**

Annexe B

All respondents to the Call for Evidence

Code	Age	Gender	Organisation	Organisation type	Sector	Asylum Seeker/ Refugee?
Respondent 1	Not specified	Not specified	Helen Bamber Foundation	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 2	Not specified	Not specified	Southwark Council	Public	Public	Not specified
Respondent 3	Not specified	Not specified	Local Government Association	Public	Public	Not specified
Respondent 4	69	Female	CALAIS LIGHT	Voluntary	Third	No
Respondent 5	62	Female	Bridges Programmes	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 6	Not specified	Not specified	Coventry City Council	Public	Public	Not specified
Respondent 7	42	Male	Croydon Voluntary Action	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 8	29	Female	Amna	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 9	Not specified	Not specified	British Red Cross	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 10	45	Female	Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University	Education	Other	No
Respondent 11	Not specified	Not specified	Carlisle Cathedral, Church of England	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 12	51	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 13	53	Male	The Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 14	48	Male	Scottish Refugee Council	Charity	Third	Former refugee with British Citizenship
Respondent 15	43	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 16	32	Female	Good Faith Partnership	Faith-based	Third	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 17	Not specified	Not specified	London South Bank University	Education	Other	No
Respondent 18	Not specified	Not specified	Hikmat Devon CIC	Community Interest Company	Third	Not specified
Respondent 19	Not specified	Not specified	The Children's Society	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 20	Not specified	Not specified	The New Penny Ltd.	Limited company	Third	No
Respondent 21	Not specified	Not specified	Student Action for Refugees (STAR)	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 22	38	Female	Spring Housing Association	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 23	Not specified	Not specified	UNHCR	International agency	Third	No
Respondent 24	33	Male	Experts by Experience Employment Initiative	Community Interest Company	Third	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain

Code	Age	Gender	Organisation	Organisation type	Sector	Asylum Seeker/ Refugee?
Respondent 25	Not specified	Not specified	Advice NI	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 26	25	Male	NACCOM (No Accommodation Network)	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 27	Not specified	Not specified	Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit	Charity	Third	Not specified
Respondent 28	Not specified	Not specified	NACCOM (No Accommodation Network)	Charity	Third	Various
Respondent 29	27	Female	Refugee Council	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 30	Not specified	Not specified	International Rescue Committee	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 31	81	Female	Sutton Deanery Refugee Community Sponsorship Group	Voluntary	Third	No
Respondent 32	28	Male	Refugee and Migrants Forum of Essex and London	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 33	58	Male	Leeds Beckett University	Education	Other	No
Respondent 34	Not specified	Not specified	One Strong Voice, Survivors Speak Out, Young Outspoken Survivors, Women's Group Glasgow Centre	Voluntary	Third	Various
Respondent 35	Not specified	Not specified	Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham	Education	Other	No
Respondent 36	37	Not specified	Jesuit Refugee Service UK	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 37	32	Female	Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 38	24	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 39	18	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	Family Reunion
Respondent 40	63	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 41	22	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 42	48	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 43	19	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain

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Respondent 44	39	Trans Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am here on spousal visa but I am fleeing discrimination in China based on my sexual preference so I consider myself a refugee.
Respondent 45	22	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 46	34	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and currently have no recourse to public funds
Respondent 47	20	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 48	59	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 49	Not specified	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 50	Not specified	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 51	33	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 52	Not specified	Not specified	Cardinal Hume Centre	Charity	Third	Not specified
Respondent 53	Not specified	Not specified	Tyneside Welcomes	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 54	Not specified	Not specified	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Business	Other	Not specified
Respondent 55	39	Male	The Salvation Army United Kingdom and Ireland Territory	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 56	50	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 57	27	Female	West End Refugee Services	Charity	Third	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 58	Not specified	Not specified	Central England Law Centre	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 59	Not specified	Not specified	Birmingham Community Hosting Network	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 60	Not specified	Not specified	Doctors of the World UK	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 61	25	Female	London Councils	Public	Public	No
Respondent 62	Not specified	Not specified	Migration Yorkshire	Other	Other	No

Code	Age	Gender	Organisation	Organisation type	Sector	Asylum Seeker/ Refugee?
Respondent 63	Not specified	Not specified	Migrant Help	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 64	Not specified	Not specified	Migration Yorkshire - Refugee Integration Strategy and Forum	Other	Other	No
Respondent 65	57	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 66	33	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I came to the UK as part of a resettlement programme
Respondent 67	42	Male	Migration Policy and Practice	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 68	46	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 69	34	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and currently have no recourse to public funds
Respondent 70	52	Male	Micro Rainbow	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 71						
Respondent 72	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 73	49	Female	TortureID	Private company by guarantee	Third	No
Respondent 74	50	Female	Global Link	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 75	68	Male	Various charities - all with a connection to a church or christian organisation	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 76	64	Male	Crown Terrace Baptist Church 2022	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 77	25	Female	Refugee Welcome Homes	Community Interest Company	Third	No
Respondent 78	24	Male	Spring Housing Association	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 79	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 80	38	Female	Freedom from Torture	Charity	Third	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 81	28	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am currently going through the UK asylum system
Respondent 82	Not specified	Not specified	Hope not hate	Limited company	Third	No
Respondent 83	59	Female	Darlington Assistance for Refugees	Charity	Third	No

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Respondent 84	29	Male	The Entrepreneurial Refugee Network	Community Interest Company	Third	No
Respondent 85	66	Female	The Salvation Army Gateshead	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 86	Not specified	Not specified	Mission and Public Affairs Council, Church of England	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 87	39	Female	Manchester City of Sanctuary	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 88	68	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 89	32	Female	RefuAid	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 90	Not specified	Not specified	Cardiff University	Education	Other	No
Respondent 91	65	Female	St Laurence Church	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 92	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 93	65	Female	Croeso Menai	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 94	83	Male	Sutton for Peace & Justice /Sutton Deanery Sponsorship Group	Voluntary	Third	No
Respondent 95	48	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 96	54	Female	Coventry City Council	Public	Public	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 97	42	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 98	38	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 99	50	Not specified	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 100	42	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 101	66	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 102	76	Female	Restore, Amnesty	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 103	78	Male	Restore, Amnesty	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 104	54	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 105	57	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 106	53	Female	St Thomas Church Lancaster Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Network	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 107	55	Male	Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust	Foundation Trust	Third	No
Respondent 108	70	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 109	Not specified	Not specified	West Sussex County Council	Public	Public	No
Respondent 110	40	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain

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Respondent 111	49	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 112	41	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 113	48	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I am a British National Overseas (Hong Kong)
Respondent 114	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 115	Not specified	Not specified	diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Justice & Peace Co-ordinating council	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 116	63	Male	Tyneside Welcomes	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 117	48	Male	Ashley Community Housing	Limited company	Third	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 118	Not specified	Not specified	Asylum Matters	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 119	52	Female	Caton Methodist Church	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 120	36	Male	Covenrty Refugees and Migration Centre	Charity	Third	I applied for asylum in the UK and currently have no recourse to public funds
Respondent 121	73	Male	No To Hassockfield Campaign Group	Voluntary	Third	No
Respondent 122	80	Not specified	Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees	Voluntary	Third	No
Respondent 123	59	Male	Migrant English Support Hub (MESH)	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 124	Not specified	Not specified	Devon County Council	Public	Public	No
Respondent 125	37	Female	Coventry city council	Public	Public	No
Respondent 126	Not specified	Not specified	RCPsych Working Group on Mental Health and Forced Migration	Other	Other	No
Respondent 127	58	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 128	50	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	Vietnamese boat people in late 70s
Respondent 129	Not specified	Male	Methodist Church	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 130	71	Male	Doncaster Conversation Club	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 131	Not specified	Female	Caritas Salford	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 132	53	Male	Methodist Church	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 133	39	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	Applied for asylum awaiting for main interview, I have leave outside of the emigration rules from the Home Office

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Respondent 134	30	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 135	68	Male	Lichfield Cathedral	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 136	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 137	Not specified	Not specified	Croydon Adult Learning and Training	Other	Other	Not specified
Respondent 138	Not specified	Not specified	Lord Bishop of Leicester	Faith-based	Third	Not specified
Respondent 139	67	Male	Churches Together in Wales	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 140	33	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 141	60	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	ex-refugee
Respondent 142	Not specified	Not specified	Baca	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 143	34	Female	European's Welfare Association CIC	Community Interest Company	Third	I came to the UK as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme
Respondent 144	Not specified	Not specified	Breaking Barriers	Charity	Third	I came to the UK as part of a resettlement programme
Respondent 145	52	Female	Grampian Regional Equality Council	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 146	55	Female	Member of local church	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 147	49	Male	New River Baptist Church	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 148	66	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 149	21	Female	Walking with centre	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and currently have no recourse to public funds
Respondent 150	58	Male	St Albans Cathedral	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 151	67	Female	Bath Welcomes Refugees	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 152	70	Male	Together for Ipswich	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 153	47	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I came to the UK as part of a resettlement programme
Respondent 154	50	Male	Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 155	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Individual	Other	Not specified
Respondent 156	29	Female	Reach Children's Hub	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 157	80	Male	Clevedon Churches Refugee Support Group	Faith-based	Third	Not specified

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Respondent 158	30	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	I came to the UK as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme
Respondent 159	59	Female	Central Baptist	Faith-based	Third	No
Respondent 160	71	Female	Malvern Welcomes	Charity	Third	No
Respondent 161	71	Female	Not specified	Individual	Other	No
Respondent 162	Not specified	Not specified	University of Leicester	Education	Other	No
Respondent 163	49	Male	Not specified	Individual	Other	I applied for asylum in the UK and have been granted leave to remain
Respondent 164	47	Female	Not specified	Not specified		No
Respondent 165	35	Male	Lancashire County Council	Council	Public	Yes
Respondent 166	54	Female	ESOL Community Learning North Somerset Council	Council	Public	No
Respondent 167	41	Female	Not specified	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 168	72	Female	St Bartholomew's Church Conversation Group	Not specified		No
Respondent 169	55	Male	Louth Churches for Refugees	Not specified		No
Respondent 170	49	Male	The Eritrean community in Swansea	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 171	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified		No
Respondent 172	61	Female	Coventry and Warwick Universities	Public	Public	No
Respondent 173	25	Female	Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group	Not specified		No
Respondent 174	28	Female	Ukrainian scheme	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 175	33	Female		Not specified		No
Respondent 176	61	Female	GARAS	Not specified		No
Respondent 177	Not specified	Not specified	Adult Education Service - ESOL	Not specified		No
Respondent 178	35	Female	Lancashire County Council	Public	Public	No
Respondent 179	50	Female	NHS	Public	Public	No
Respondent 180	19	Male	Rosendale	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 181	Not specified	Female	Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University	Not specified		No
Respondent 182	59	Male	Not specified	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 183	41	Male	Bradford African Community (BAC)	Not specified		No
Respondent 184	58	Female	University of Birmingham	Not specified		No
Respondent 185	34	Male	Not specified	Not specified		Yes

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Respondent 186	46	Male	Not specified	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 187	25	Female	London Borough of Hounslow	Not specified		No
Respondent 188	29	Male	Not specified	Not specified		No
Respondent 189	59	Male	Restore - a project of Birmingham Churches Together	Not specified		No
Respondent 190	30	Female	Citizens Advice Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire	Not specified		No
Respondent 191	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified		No
Respondent 192	80	Female	Independent, volunteering with several organisations supporting asylum seekers	Not specified		No
Respondent 193	44	Male	Church of the Nazarene	Not specified		No
Respondent 194	66	Female	Citizens Advice Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent	Not specified		No
Respondent 195	66	Female	Rossendale Refugee Support group	Not specified		No
Respondent 196	Not specified	Male	Not specified	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 197	53	Female	Restore	Not specified		No
Respondent 198	52	Female	Restore	Not specified		No
Respondent 199	41	Female	Solihull college	Not specified		No
Respondent 200	42	Male	Croydon Refugee Day Centre	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 201	23	Male	Not specified	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 202	59	Female	Lowering the Bar CIC	Not specified		No
Respondent 203	Not specified	Female	FWT- A centre for Women	Not specified		Yes
Respondent 204	33	Male	Not specified	Not specified		Yes

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- ² Home Office, (2019) Indicators of Integration Framework Third Edition. available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/627cc6d3d3bf7f052d33b06e/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019-horr109.pdf>
- ³ LSE (March 2024) The Asylum System and Refugee Integration: Economic Analysis. Report produced on behalf of the Commission on the Integration of Refugees.
- ⁴ Phillimore, J. & Sin Yi, C. (2021). 'The violence of uncertainty: Empirical evidence on how asylum waiting time undermines refugee health.' *Social science & medicine* 282: 114154
- ⁵ Burford, R. (2023), 'Over 1,100 refugees made homeless in London as Homes for Ukraine placements come to end'. *Evening Standard*. Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-ukrainian-families-homeless-homes-for-ukraine-b1062895.html>
- ⁶ Refugee Action (2019) 'Safe but alone: The role of English language in allowing refugees to overcome loneliness'; Akresh, I. R., D. S. Massey, and R. Frank (2014) 'Beyond English proficiency: Rethinking immigrant integration.' *Social Science Research* 45: 200-210.
- ⁷ Foster, D. & Bolton, P. (2017). 'Adult ESOL in England.' House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 7905. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7905/>
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- ¹¹ Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital' in: Richardson, J. (ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258
- ¹² Home Office (2019) Indicators of Integration Framework. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/627cc6d3d3bf7f052d33b06e/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019-horr109.pdf>
- ¹³ Costanza-Chock, S. (2020) *Design Justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need*. Cambridge: MIT Press.