



Commission on the
Integration of
Refugees

Local Engagement Hearings:

Key Findings



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Local Engagement Hearings: Key Findings

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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.

Local Engagement Hearings

Between November 2022 and November 2023, the Commission on the Integration of Refugees held a total of eight regional hearings around the UK in order to capture the voices and experiences of people with first-hand experience of the refugee and asylum system. During these hearings, Commissioners heard evidence from refugees and asylum seekers, local government, third sector workers and politicians in local hearings in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Hereford, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Belfast. A full list of dates and locations of the hearings, as well as details of panellists and attendees, can be found at the end of this document.

The hearings each consisted of several thematic panels, with pre-circulated questions to serve as discussion prompts for the panellists and Commissioners. While many of the panel themes remained consistent across all hearings (for example, issues around housing, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), education, employment, and policy), panel themes were also designed to reflect issues local to the specific hearing.

This document provides a summary of the key findings and themes that emerged from the local hearings, as well as the resulting suggestions made to the Commission with regards to improving integration outcomes of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. The findings are presented according to the following six themes, which emerged from the evidence and are loosely based on the Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework (2019):



Governance



**Accommodation
and Living
Conditions**



**Education
and English
Language
Provision**



**Employment and
Entrepreneurs**



**Social
Inclusion**



**Health and
Mental Health**

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or visit www.refugeeintegrationuk.com/publications



Governance



Structure of the Asylum System

- › There was general consensus among participants across the hearings that the UK operates a tiered refugee and asylum system which discriminates against asylum applicants when compared to those arriving through resettlement schemes.
- › Panellists across the country commented on the fact that there is a strong connection between how well the asylum system works and applicants' ability to integrate. One panellist at the West Midlands Hearing remarked that it is very hard to integrate refugees when the system is "stigmatising and isolating people from one another".
- › Panellists in Glasgow pointed to the New Scots Integration Strategy¹ as an example of best practice, especially the commitment to "integration from day one", which was widely referred to as a "gold standard". The theme of "integration from day one" was also referred to positively in other hearings as an inspirational model.
- › Many participants raised the notion that the issue of refugee resettlement and integration is fundamentally a human rights issue. Participants at the North East Hearing referenced the Geneva Convention and raised concerns that the current policy goals of the government in Whitehall represented a flouting of this convention.

Home Office, Local Government, and Devolved Governments

- › Panellists across the country commented consistently on the lack of effective coordination and communication between the Home Office and local authorities. For example, representatives of the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP) told commissioners at the Birmingham Hearing that they hold "regular meetings" but that Home Office officials "rarely come". And that "If they do attend, it's for a new phase... you'll have them at the meeting and then at the next meeting somebody else will have taken their place". As numerous panellists pointed out, this lack of consistent Home Office participation in local planning had an adverse effect on integration outcomes due to the lack of coordination between local and national government.
- › Several participants at the South East, North East, and North West Hearings – including council officers and lived experience voices – called for more local authority oversight and involvement in the asylum system. Currently, local authorities (LAs) have no say over how and where people are housed in the area. Often LAs do not know that new people seeking asylum and refugees have been housed in the area until they are about to or after they have arrived.
- › Some examples of good collaboration were noted, especially at the Glasgow Hearing, where Scotland's smaller scale enabled the cultivation of personal relationships between politicians, local government officials, and stakeholders working on the ground.
- › Panellists at the Cardiff Hearing also praised Wales' Nation of Sanctuary Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan² as an example of best practice.
- › Stakeholders in the devolved nations noted that although Scotland and Wales both have policies of "integration from day one", many practical aspects relating to refugee integration remain the provision of Whitehall, resulting in a discrepancy between local policy commitment and the ability to deliver frontline services that would uphold this commitment.

Politics, the Media, and Public Discourse

- › The issue of public discourse arose at all of the local hearings, especially the current “hostile environment” towards refugees and asylum seekers stoked by the government and the media. There was a general consensus that language choice matters, and that the use of negative rhetoric and discourse has real-world impact on refugees and asylum seekers, especially when it comes to integration.
- › One participant at the Glasgow Hearing noted that public opinion polls show that people in Scotland have similar levels of hostility to people seeking asylum as do people in England, but that there is less of a political will in Scotland to turn immigration into a hot button issue, and the Scottish media reflect this.
- › Participants from the third sector, and especially current and former refugees and asylum seekers, gave testimony to the Commission on the negative impact of anti-immigrant public discourse. Many expressed concerns about the way in which the politicisation of discourse around refugee and asylum issues acted as a barrier to successful integration.
- › Many participants at the Newcastle Hearing raised serious concerns about the direction of current government policy, which is, according to one third sector representative, tipping into a “containment and detention model”. She argued that it is essential to turn away from this model and think seriously about integration instead. According to the same participant, government policies designed to disincentivise asylum migrants actively impedes integration policies.

“We hold regular meetings, but Home Office officials rarely come. If they do attend, it’s for a new phase... you’ll have them at the meeting and then at the next meeting somebody else will have taken their place.”

A representative of the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP).

Accommodation and Living Conditions



Hotels and Temporary Accommodation

- › Participants across the country commented on the damaging effect of temporary accommodation, both on the mental health of people seeking asylum and on local services and councils. For example, a person seeking asylum in Croydon (which hosts a high number of people seeking asylum in temporary accommodation) informed the Commission he had been living in the same hotel for 26 months: “I came here with batteries fully charged, happy to find a place where I can live safely, but now the batteries have been drained and I don’t have the energy to continue”. According to the Mayor of Croydon, the accommodation in which this man is being housed is not suitable and safeguarding is below standard.
- › Numerous panellists around the country raised the issue of food in hotels and temporary accommodation. Often, the food is “inedible” or “culturally inappropriate”. This leaves people at risk of suffering malnutrition. For example, one respondent in Hereford spoke about a volunteered women and children’s support group in which “one child had only eaten cereal for six weeks”.
- › The issue of homelessness was discussed at a number of hearings, with many panellists recommending that the current move-on period be doubled from 28 to 56 days to be in line with homelessness regulations. Rowenna Foggie, Migration, Refugee and Asylum Lead at Newcastle City Council, told Commissioners at the Newcastle Hearing that: “It is as if the system is designed for people to fall off a cliff edge at the end of it if they do not have the resources and skills to navigate it. Homelessness has become a part of the asylum process”.
- › At the Birmingham Hearing, a representative of the West Midlands Combined Authority told the Commission that there is “real concern” about the homelessness implications of the Nationality and Borders Act, especially if a new asylum accommodation institution were to open in the West Midlands.
- › Panellists in the Birmingham, London, and Newcastle Hearings commented on the fact that asylum dispersal policy will continue to favour socially deprived areas disproportionately because the government does not adjust the funding based on local accommodation costs. Participants also stressed the need to revisit the use of private contractors in the area of asylum seeker support because, in the words of one panellist in the West Midlands, the “experience of Birmingham is pretty appalling”.
- › There was some support across the hearings for returning to a system of asylum dispersal in which local authorities had more control and influence over what is happening in their area.
- › Council representatives in the North East said that their local authorities are suffering from an undersupply of housing. In Gateshead, for example, there are only 10 bed spaces for all homeless people across the council area.
- › Lived experience voices in Belfast testified to the long-term mental and physical health impact of hotel accommodation. Women from Anaka Women’s Collective told Commissioners about the difficulty of living with small children in a single hotel room, and the fact that children weren’t allowed outside to play.

“I came here with batteries fully charged, happy to find a place where I can live safely, but now the batteries have been drained and I don’t have the energy to continue.”

A person seeking asylum in Croydon informed the Commission he had been living in the same hotel for 26 months.

Dispersal

- › The majority of respondents expressed concerns about increased dispersal, especially in rural areas where there may be a lack of frontline services. However, panellists in both Hereford and Cardiff commented that rural locations could also increase integration due to the smaller scale and higher likelihood of personal relationships being formed.
- › Panellists in Cardiff expressed support for the notion of a “place-based approach”, whereby the needs and requirements of refugees and asylum seekers are taken into account when making dispersal decisions – for example, an LGBTQI+ person seeking asylum who has fled gender-based persecution in their country of origin, may be further traumatised by being placed in a conservative rural community with no LGBTQI+ specific services.

Other Issues Affecting Living Conditions

- › LGBTQI+ respondents in Cardiff also stressed the need for a more informed approach to housing refugees and asylum seekers fleeing persecution and discrimination. For example, housing a gay or trans person seeking asylum amongst heterosexual men from their country of origin can often be re-traumatising and lead to further mental and physical health issues, as well as significant safeguarding concerns.
- › Housing in Northern Ireland has become a highly sensitive issue within a complex sectarian context with significant social impact. Panellists at the Belfast hearing provided written evidence detailing this issue, and the complex political and social impact of the paramilitary takeover of housing services.

“It is as if the system is designed for people to fall off a cliff edge at the end of it if they do not have the resources and skills to navigate it. Homelessness has become a part of the asylum process.”

Migration, Refugee and Asylum Lead at Newcastle City Council.

Education and English Language Provision



ESOL Provision

- › There was widespread support for better and more accessible ESOL provision, particularly for those attempting to enter the employment sector. For example, panellists in Croydon testified that English language training is vital to enable refugees to access employment: “The inability to speak English sometimes prevents refugees from accessing the most basic services, such as taking a bus to a job interview”.
- › Participants and lived experience voices across the country testified to the damaging effect of the six-month limit on access to ESOL for those not on official schemes (i.e. that ESOL is only provided after six months in the system). Schemes like ESOL cafés can help people seeking asylum who are not yet eligible for formal ESOL support to practice English and make friends.
- › A council worker in the North East recommended the implementation of a “Welcome to the UK Course” which could be delivered by local authorities and the charity sector to all new arrivals to ensure they knew how to navigate life in the UK. ESOL funding should be tied into this and there should be provision for support during the first six to 12 months.
- › Panellists in Cardiff expressed support for the Nation of Sanctuary Plan, which enables people seeking asylum in Wales to access English language support from day one. However, there was also frustration regarding the difficulty of implementing this strategy due to a lack of qualified ESOL teachers, oversubscribed services, and red tape imposed from Whitehall.

Education

- › Participants across the country testified that the experience of young refugees in school is often challenging. Refugee children often end up attending less well-performing schools in more deprived areas, despite the fact it is often schools in the “leafy suburbs” that have the resources to enable them to provide high quality integration programmes and English language provision.
- › The current funding for schools only allocates funding according to the number of students a school has at the beginning of the academic year. This disincentivises schools from taking new students in the middle of the year, such as children seeking asylum .
- › One paediatrician at the Newcastle Hearing said that ensuring access to school for asylum seeking children is a stabilisation factor for their mental health. It also enhances connections for the whole family, improving wider integration.
- › Dispersal was also raised as an educational issue, as often children end up having to move school once they have already settled, further disrupting their education.
- › The lack of language or mental health support in schools was widely commented on, although some panellists gave examples of schools that have made positive changes in these areas and have attained the status of Sanctuary Schools.

Children and Young People

- › There was widespread support from lived experience and third sector contributors for the need for Home Office workers carrying out age assessments at the UK border to receive proper training.
- › Lived experience voices testified at a number of hearings regarding the damaging and traumatic effect of the asylum system on Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). There were suggestions that UASC should be provided with mental health support on their arrival in the UK.
- › Participants at the Manchester Hearing testified that UASC often do not have information to manage the asylum system themselves. It is important to provide them with support and the ability to exert their own agency, for example through encouraging leadership skills. A group of UASC supported by the Children's Society are calling for legal guardians, who would act to support child applicants throughout their asylum journey. The guardian would be their primary point of call. If this were implemented, UASC would not have to constantly repeat their story to different bureaucracies and have continuity of legal and pastoral support throughout the application process. The campaign is directed at influencing government policy, however, these guardians could be employed by social services or a commissioned charity. A similar policy already exists in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- › Participants in the London Hearing testified that schools can take measures to support parents of refugee children, who may not speak English or understand the system. One school in Croydon has a “package of welcome” for new arrivals which includes a buddy system which matches students with someone who speaks the same language. ESOL classes for both the family and children are provided. The school also helps to signpost families to food banks and provides access to technology. Another school held a coffee morning to welcome the parents of new arrivals from Hong Kong. Staff explained a variety of aspects of school life, including the school day, school uniform and how to get to school.

One school in Croydon has a “package of welcome” for new arrivals which includes a buddy system which matches students with someone who speaks the same language. ESOL classes for both the family and children are provided.

Employment and Entrepreneurship



Right to Work

- › Participants at all the local hearings in which the issue arose commented on the need to rethink the existing ban on asylum seekers working while their application is being considered. For example, panellists in Croydon expressed surprise that we are “still talking about the issue” of the right to work in 2023, when the negative repercussions of the ban have been clear for many years.
- › Several panellists at the London Hearing testified that if asylum seekers were allowed to work, it would improve their mental health and integration prospects. One participant who had claimed asylum in the UK said that being able to work while he claimed asylum was the “only thing” that kept him going when he was in the UK. It gave him skills and confidence.
- › There was also strong support within the business community present at the London Hearing for lifting the ban on asylum seekers working. The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) testified that they believe the rules should be changed. The LCCI representative told the Commission that “from a business perspective the current embargo makes no sense. There is a skills crisis in London across many sectors. The policy is contrary to UK PLC and Global Britain”.

Skills and Accreditation

- › Panellists in the Newcastle and London hearings also testified to the difficulty faced by refugees and asylum seekers in applying their existing skills in the UK context, often due to lack of translation or interpretation services. English language proficiency needs to be increased to allow asylum seekers to seek employment in the UK.
- › Numerous respondents across the hearings pointed to the gap between refugee and asylum seekers’ levels of education and skills and their ability to integrate into the workforce.
- › Participants in Londio commented on the need for greater employment training in skills such as CV writing, job applications, and interview techniques.
- › Panellists in Newcastle and Manchester also commented on the fact that many refugees and asylum seekers come from cultures in which entrepreneurship is expected, and therefore arrive with the expectation to be able to start their own business. Some panellists reflected that this represents an opportunity for bringing jobs and services to the community, while others were sceptical due to the amount of red tape and bureaucracy involved.

“From a business perspective the current embargo makes no sense. There is a skills crisis in London across many sectors. The policy is contrary to UK PLC and Global Britain.”

The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) representative.

Social Inclusion



Community – Bonds, Bridges, Links

- › Panellists at all Hearings expressed the crucial role the third sector and civil society play in welcoming and supporting new arrivals, although some expressed frustration that grassroots and civil society groups are left to “fill the gaps” in frontline services.
- › The My Friendly City project in the West Midlands was praised by participants at the Birmingham Hearing for adopting a grassroots approach to building a migrant friendly city.
- › Community support networks and sponsorship schemes were widely praised, especially with regard to their role in facilitating integration, but it was recognised that they often lack resources, funding, or access to information. Members of a community sponsorship scheme testified at the Glasgow Hearing that there is often a lack of awareness of such schemes in the wider public, and that the application process for community groups is arduous and potentially off-putting.
- › There was some agreement across the hearings that volunteering could present an opportunity for building social bonds and bridges, although some panellists, especially in more underprivileged areas, expressed concerns that volunteering could be exploited by organisations seeking free labour and did not provide an adequate alternative to paid employment.

Faith-Based Organisations

- › Participants at the London and Newcastle hearings in particular commented on the fact that UK society is not aware of the contribution that faith communities make in supporting marginalised communities. At the same time, the government and other statutory agencies rely heavily on their contributions.
- › One panellist at the Newcastle Hearing noted how the failure to include faith communities in significant debates inhibits conversations about integration. There are significant lessons to be learnt from the North East regarding how faith communities, local authorities, and central government can work together.
- › Northern Ireland provides an interesting counterexample to this trend. While faith-based groups are still highly involved in providing grassroots support and frontline services to for refugees and asylum seekers, the post-conflict nature of Northern Ireland means that these services often fracture along sectarian lines. Further, there has been a significant rise in sect-based racial hatred and xenophobic attacks against for refugees and asylum seekers,³ especially in sectarian areas.

Transport and Living Costs

- › Participants at numerous local hearings pointed to the difficulty of accessing local transport networks for for refugees and asylum seekers, especially in rural areas.
- › Numerous participants suggested implementing a free bus pass for refugees and asylum seekers, to allow them to access local services and community support.
- › Participants at the Hereford Hearing pointed to successful bike schemes run by local grassroots organisations as a potential alternative to public transport.
- › Panellists at the Newcastle and Manchester Hearings testified as to how the cost-of-living crisis has been affecting vulnerable populations. One participant in Newcastle said that: “These are big challenges to integration. If you can’t afford the bus fare, you can’t integrate”.
- › Commissioners in Belfast heard of a pilot scheme funded by the Home Office launched on 1 November 2023 to provide free public transport to asylum seekers for their first six months, which was widely welcomed by stakeholders and lived experience voices.

Health and Mental Health



- › There was widespread agreement that there should be a trauma-informed approach to integration. Participants across the country gave testimony on the mental health implications of the current refugee and asylum system, especially the focus on “deterrence and detention” on already traumatised populations.
- › Healthcare professionals at the Newcastle Hearing voiced serious concerns about Home Office contractors moving asylum seekers without informing their healthcare providers, as it is dangerous and undermines continuity of care.
- › According to healthcare professionals at the Newcastle Hearing, the main barriers of access to healthcare for asylum seekers and refugees include:
 - Not understanding how the NHS works and fear of being charged
 - Cultural barriers, such as delays in health seeking behaviour
 - Language barriers, often not helped by lack of (or poor) interpreters
 - The asylum process can distract people from their health issues
 - Mental health provision in general is very difficult to access on the NHS.
- › Panellists in Glasgow commented on the prevalence of violence against women and girls. Domestic abuse and controlling behaviour means that women sometimes have no access to family income. This also stops them accessing services.
- › Panellists in Cardiff commented favourably on the Traumatic Stress Wales service, which has a pillar dedicated to asylum seekers and refugees and represents a therapeutic intervention. Wales is also the only country in the UK that funds a family reunification service (through the British Red Cross).
- › LGBTQI+ respondents at the Cardiff Hearing expressed the need for greater sensitivity to specific needs of the LGBTQI+ community, especially around mental health support.
- › Healthcare professionals in Newcastle testified that children seeking asylum in the UK have significant health needs. They frequently suffer from growth problems and chronic diseases, which are often not recognised or properly managed. They also often suffer from PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Panellists in Cardiff commented favourably on the Traumatic Stress Wales service, which has a pillar dedicated to asylum seekers and refugees and represents a therapeutic intervention.

Details of Local Hearings

Birmingham

28 November 2022, Birmingham Central Library

Session One: Housing and Resettlement (Chair: Lord Alex Carlile)

Session Two: Integration: What works? (Chair: Prof Jenny Phillimore)

Session Three: Integration: What works? (Chair: Dr Ed Kessler)

Session Four: Education, Inclusion and Young People (Chair: Lord Alex Carlile)

Commissioners in attendance:

Trixie Brenninkmeijer

Jacqui Broadhead

Lord Alex Carlile

David Goodhart

Alphonsine Kabagabo

Dr Ed Kessler

Prof Hanna Kienzler

Jehangir Malik

Prof Jenny Phillimore

(During the morning of the hearing, three of the commissioners - Alphonsine Kabagabo, Dr Ed Kessler, and Prof Hanna Kienzler - visited Brushstrokes, a community hub which provides a number of integration and support services for refugees.)

Other Attendees:

Dr Christopher Cooper-Davies

Hannah Fox

Francesca Klug

Panellists:

Karzan Kawani, Mohamed Mustafa, Abbas Baig and Shari Brown (Refugee and Migrant Centre, RMC)

Nimco Mumin and Yasmin Begum (West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, WMSMP)

Jude Hawes (Citizens Advice, Staffordshire)

Ahmed Salam (Dudley MBC)

Rachel Chiu (Spring Housing)

Satvinder Kaur Goraya and Catherine Ball (Wolverhampton Council)

James Walker (West Midlands Combined Authority)

Fahim Zazai (Walsall's Afghan Community Group)

Louis Messi (Former Asylum Seeker)

Andy Hoole (Migration Policy and Practice)

Caroline Higgins (Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre)

Peter Barnett, Inderjit Kaur (Coventry City Council)

Cllr John Cotton, Saba Rai and Marsela Hoxha (Birmingham City Council)

Elizabeth Kardynal and Nataliia Inshyna (European Welfare Association, EWA)

David Newall, Assayed Dawood and Ethel Mkandawire (Brushstrokes Community project, Sandwell)

Emma Birks (Asylum Matters, West Midlands)

Jeremy Thompson, Caroline Homan and Nahla Ibrahim (Restore)

Dr Irena Hergottova (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council)

London

6 March 2023, London South Bank University, Croydon

Session One: Entrepreneurship and Employment (Chaired by Lord Carlile)

Session Two: Community and Home (Chaired by Lord Carlile)

Session Three: Interfaith Session (Chaired by Bishop Paul McAleenan)

Session Four: Education and Integration (Chaired by Nicola Thomas)

Commissioners in attendance:

Trixie Brenninkmeijer

Lord Alex Carlile

Janice Lopatkin

Prof Cornelius Katona

Bishop Paul McAleenan

Tony Smith

Nicola Thomas

Other Attendees:

Dr Christopher Cooper-Davies

Sophie Davies

Panellists:

Charlie Fraser (TERN)

Yusuf Ciftci (Experts by Experience Employment Initiative)

Yeukai Taruvinga (Active Horizons)

Isobelle Ford (Skylight Ventures)

Igor Bartkiv and James Watkins (London Chamber of Commerce)

Mariam Tahir (Coffee with Kids)

Matt Powell (Breaking Barriers) Kathy Margerison (SEIDS)

Iman Maygi, Akriti Purohit and Adam Yasir (Croydon Refugee and New Communities Forum)

Mayor Jason Perry, Rosie Edser, Akriti Purohit and Shelley Davies (Croydon Council)

Sarah Jones MP

Linda Fox (St Matthew's Church)

Alejandro Gavidia and Colin Iddles (Christ Church)

Rosa Lewis (Caritas)

Maimuna Jawo, Stephanie White and Andy Brittain (Croydon Police)

Ben Taylor (Croydon Voluntary Action)

Bishop of Croydon, Rt Revd Dr Rosemarie Mallett

Alan Bayes, Penny Smith-Orr and Qaseem Ahmed (Ahmadiyya Community)

Mustafa Hatipoglu and Ben Still (Salvation Army)

Nadir Mothojakan (Croydon Mosque and Islamic Centre)

Claudia Lopez-Prieto (St Gabriel's Secondary School)

Louise Porter (St Dunstan's Cheam Primary)

Josephine Copeland (All Saint's School Croydon)

Patrick Shields (Headteacher of St Mary's Secondary School, Croydon)

Barnabas Shelbourne (Legacy Youth Zone)

Carol Squires, Linda Gray (CALAT)

John Koo (Lecturer in EU Law at London South Bank University)

Newcastle

21 March 2023, Newcastle Anglican Cathedral, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Welcome by the Bishop of Durham

Session One: Housing, Dispersal and Homelessness (Chair: Dr Ed Kessler)

Session Two: Faith, Community, and Inclusion (Chair: Dr Ed Kessler)

Session Three: Health, Mental Health, and Public Health (Chair: Prof Cornelius Katona)

Session Four: Detention, Return and Legal Advice (Chair: Kevin Hyland)

Commissioners in attendance:

Dr Ed Kessler

Prof Cornelius Katona

Kevin Hyland

Other Attendees:

Dr Christopher Cooper-Davies

Sophie Davies

Dr Emanuelle Degli Esposti

Panellists:

Nigel Bamford (Senior Housing Support Worker, Gateshead Council)

Rowenna Foggie (Newcastle Council)

Jen Laws (Asylum Matters)

Duncan McAuley (Action Foundation)

Jonah Mesgarnezhad (City Church)

Sara Muzaffar (Peace of Mind)

Austin Oshegbu (Tyne and Wear Citizens/Together We Can)

CLlr Lesley Storey (Cabinet Member for Vibrant City, Newcastle Council)

Mohitor Rahman (Your Homes Newcastle)

Margaret Gregg

Revd Chris Howson (Sunderland City of Sanctuary)

Miurel Gurierrez and Cressida Thomson (DAR)

Sally Mitchison (Tyneside Welcomes)

Habib Rahman (North East Refugee Service)

Emad Raad and Anna Lewis (Open Door North East)

Suraiya Riyaz (British Sri Lankan Community)

Emma Pearson, Rosie Vasina, Rachael Smith and Sadia Sikandar (WERS)

Nasrin Ahmadi (JET)

Dr Carole Le Darcy (Bespoke Psychological Services)

Dr Christian Harkensee (Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust)

Elizabeth Leeming (Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals)

Jeffreys Muguti (Tyne Social Club)

Ramatoulie Saïdykhan (Creative Minds)

Liz Archibald and Azad Hasan (Justice and Peace Refugee Project)

Sandra Burton (Friendship Across Borders and Durham Visitors Group)

Clare Hurst (North East Law Centre)

Julian Prior (Good Faith Partnership)

Owen Temple (No to Hassockfield Group)

Manchester

30 March 2023, online via Zoom

Session One: Integration: What Works? (Chaired by Lord Alex Carlile)

Session Two: Integration, Culture and Community (Chaired by Mishka Pillay)

Session Three: Training and Access to Education (Chaired by Prof Jenny Phillimore)

Session Four: Children and Young People (Chaired by Lord Alex Carlile)

Commissioners in attendance:

Lord Alex Carlile

Dr Ed Kessler

Prof Cornelius Katona

Mishka Pillay

Prof Jenny Phillimore

Other Attendees:

Dr Christopher Cooper-Davies

Panellists:

Aleksandra Bardon and Katie Jones (North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership)

Jennie Corbett (Greater Manchester Combined Authority)

Aderonke Apata (African Rainbow Family)

Safieh Eskandar (Salford Public Health)

Julie Kashirahamwe (Refugee Programme Manager, Liverpool City Council)

Julie Savage (Asylum Matters)

Liz Hibberd (Manchester City of Sanctuary)

Mariam Yusuf (WAST Manchester)

Patrick Masebo (Manchester Refugee Support Network)

CLlr Joanna Midgley (Manchester City Council)

Vee (These Walls Must Fall)

Maryam Taher (University of Sanctuary Coordinator)

Rebecca Murray (Sheffield University)

Tandrima Mazumdar, Mikki Evue and Naomi Hamill (Salford City College)

Rebecca Joy (Lancashire Refugee Integration Team)

Reem Mohamed (Lancashire Council)

Hilda Higirot (Children's Society)

Musa Nela (Lived experience young person campaigner)

Rivka Shaw (GMIAU, All4One)

Natalie Stables (Children's Services Directorate, Salford Council)

Glasgow

26 April 2023, Glasgow Trades Hall, Glasgow

- Session One:** Asylum, Integration and Scottish Devolution (Chaired by Dr Ed Kessler)
Session Two: New Scots Integration Strategy (Chaired by Sabir Zazai)
Session Three: The Local Asylum and Resettlement Landscape in Scotland
 (Chaired by Bishop Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani)
Session Four: Housing and Home (including vulnerable communities) (Chaired by Tony Smith)

Commissioners in attendance:

Dr Ed Kessler
 Bishop Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
 Kevin Hyland
 Tony Smith
 Nicola Thomas
 Sabir Zazai
 Alphonsine Kabagabo

Other Attendees:

Dr Christopher Cooper-Davies
 Sophie Davies
 Dr Emanuelle Degli Esposti
 Hannah Fox
 Prof. Francesca Klug

Panellists:

Jennifer Ang (Just Right Scotland)
 Cllr Susan Aitken (Leader of Glasgow City Council)
 Phil Arnold (British Red Cross)
 Gayle Findlay, Dr Will Tuladhar-Douglas, Lynette O’Leary and Ania Tajsiaik (COLSA)
 Maggie Lennon (The Bridges Programme)
 Billy McKenzie (Scottish Government)
 Ahmad Murad, Gbmike Ibitoye, Angella Masangalale Nyirenda, Mohammed Kanu,
 Antony Konga Kimani and Claudia Paliais (VOICES Ambassadors)
 Ronald Tagwireyi, Gary Christie, Grant McPhail and Graham O’Neil (Scottish Refugee Council)
 Dr Esa Aldegheri (University of Glasgow and Edinburgh City of Sanctuary)
 Dr Dan Fisher (University of Glasgow)
 Oleksandra Wierzbicka and Pinar Aksu (Maryhill Integration Network)
 Paul Sweeney (Labour MSP)
 Savan Qadir (Refugee for Justice and Glasgow University)
 Alistair Dinnie (Refugee Resettlement Lead at City of Edinburgh Council)
 Maria Weigt-Bienze (Talent Beyond Boundaries)
 Fae Gerlach (Refugee Sponsorship Circle)
 Vivien Opiolka (Central and West Integration Network)
 Helen Baillot (Aberlour Scottish Guardianship Service)
 Anonymous representative from Scottish Government and Jan Macleod (Women’s Support Project)
 Fatou Gitte (Ubuntu RCO), Grant McPhail (Scottish Refugee Council)
 Daisy Vaughan Linero and Doaa Abu Amer (British Red Cross/VOICES Network)

Hereford

16 May 2023, Hereford Cathedral, Hereford

Session One: Refugee integration in rural communities (Chaired by Lord Alex Carlile)

Session Two: Two: Housing, home, and community sponsorship (Chaired by Prof Jenny Phillimore)

Session Three: Health, education, and inclusion (Chaired by Dr Ed Kessler)

Commissioners in attendance:

Lord Alex Carlile
Prof Jenny Phillimore
Jehangir Malik
Dr Ed Kessler
Trixie Brenninkmeyer

Other Attendees:

Dr Christopher Cooper-Davies

Panellists:

The Revd Canon Dean Sarah Brown
Nina Bridges (Herefordshire Council)
Abdullah Tamo, Ammouna Alali, Sharon Baker and Ruth Forecast (Malvern Welcomes)
Yvonne Rendell, Margaret Evans and Sam Roberts (Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcomes)
Maddy Salisbury, Jan Coppinger, Hannah McSherry and Jeff Beatty (Herefordshire City of Sanctuary)
Deta Almond and George Eldridge (NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB)
Stephanie Price, Khaled Satuof, Fatima Satuof and Misan McFarland (Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees)
Inspector James Ashton (West Mercia Police)
Hayley Crane (Strategic Housing Manager, Herefordshire Council)
Chris Morgan and Amelia Washbourne (Robert Owen Society)

Cardiff

3 October 2023, online

Session One: LGBTQI+ (Chair: Prof Hanna Kienzler)

Session Two: Welsh Context (Chair: Alex Carlile)

Session Three: Hong Kong BN(O)s (Chair: Dr Ed Kessler)

Commissioners in attendance:

Lord Alex Carlile

Prof Hanna Kienzler

Dr Ed Kessler

Other Attendees:

Dr Emanuelle Degli Esposti

Panellists:

Rania Vamvaka and Numair Masud (Glitter Cymru)

Sabiha Azad (Welsh Refugee Coalition)

Tanya Harrington (Stonewall Cymru)

Allen (Glitter Cymru, current asylum seeker)

Fahad Alzaabi (Glitter Cymru, asylum seeker)

Rahim El Habachi (National Theatre Wales and Glitter Cymru)

John Davies (Welsh Government)

Erica Williams and Emma Maher (ESOL lead, Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership)

Albert Davies-Smith and Gareth Lynn Montes (Welsh Refugee Council)

Bridgid Corr (Asylum Coordinator, Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership)

Adrian Marszalek (Ukraine Coordination, Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership)

Michael Smith (former HK Project Coordinator for Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership)

Zephyr Li (current HK Project Coordinator for Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership)

Natasha Gauthier (Head of Communications, Welsh Refugee Council)

Prof Sin Yi Cheung (Professor of Sociology at Cardiff University)

Germein Wong (Hong Kong BNO holder)

Belfast

2 October 2023, Clifton House, Belfast

Session One: Meeting with Anaka Women's Collective, Belfast

Session Two: Northern Ireland Context

Commissioners in attendance:

Dr Ed Kessler

Trixie Brenninkmeyer

Other Attendees:

Dr Emanuelle Degli Esposti

Panellists:

Ann Marie White (British Red Cross)

Úna Boyd and Eliza Browning (Committee on the Administration of Justice)

Anonymous representative from the Horn of Africa People's Aid and Joanna Tarach (Extern)

Israel Eguaojie (Belfast City of Sanctuary)

Two representatives from the NI Human Rights Commission

Chris Quinn (NI Commissioner for Children and Young People)

Karin Eyben (NI Children and Young People)

Elizabeth Griffith and Niamh Rowan (Law Centre NI and Migration Justice Project)

Areeg Fareh (Law Centre NI and Anaka Women's Collective)

Jonathan McNaught and Lyndsay Donaldson (The Executive Office)

Paul Noonan (Equality Commission NI)

Seana Hamil (Barnardo's Independent Guardian Service)

Afraa Awdallah Ahmed, Qalila Hamad, Helen Okbe, Afnan and Omima (Anaka Women's Collective)

Anonymous Moroccan migrant (Anaka Women's Collective)

Anonymous Syrian woman (Anaka Women's Collective)

Anonymous (Anaka Women's Collective)

1 <https://newscots.scot/the-strategy/>

2 <https://www.gov.wales/refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan-nation-sanctuary>

3 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-59654654>

4 This problem has worsened considerably since the hearing because the Home Office is trying to clear its accommodation more quickly. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/resources/why-the-changes-to-the-move-on-period-mean-more-refugees-are-facing-homelessness-and-destitution/>