



‘This is my village now’

Post-status refugee needs and experiences in Glasgow

Research report to
Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees

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fighting racism & poverty
**Glasgow Campaign to
Welcome Refugees**

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Contents	page
Summary Report	3
Acknowledgements	11
Chapter One: Introduction	12
Developing the research	
Plan of the report	
Chapter Two: Legal and Policy Background	15
British asylum system	
Getting status	
After getting status	
Chapter Three: The Refugee Experience	21
Resettling refugees	
Refugees in Scotland	
Conclusions	
Chapter Four: Methodology	29
Chapter Five: Refugees in Glasgow	35
Personal information	
Getting Status	
Issues facing refugees post-status	
Staying in Glasgow	
Experience of services	
Language and learning English	
Living in the community	
Chapter Six: Conclusions	65
Recommendations	68
Appendices	72
1. Bibliography	
2. Questionnaire for database information	
3. Questionnaire for the research study	

SUMMARY REPORT

The Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees

The Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees (GCtWR) is a group of individuals from all walks of life, including refugees themselves. The group was formed in 2000 with the aim of campaigning to improve the quality of life for refugees arriving and settling in Glasgow and the West of Scotland.

Research Funders

The research was funded by the Scottish Community Action Research Fund (SCARF). Their funding is intended to assist and empower communities to take a more active part in the decision-making processes that affect them, and provide the information needed to help improve the delivery of services or policies.

Rationale for the Study

The GCtWR believes that the political and policy processes have been focused primarily on the issue of asylum and there has been relatively little focus on those asylum seekers who successfully negotiate the process and are granted refugee status and leave to remain in the UK. But the absence of information on such refugees means that their needs may remain relatively unknown. There is, in addition, very little research on how refugees have negotiated the asylum process and what their experience of getting status has been.

It is for this reason that the present research project was developed, to interview refugees with status and to ask them about their experience of getting permission to stay, of obtaining housing, employment and welfare benefits, their use of services, and about how they were going about setting up home in the UK – this time on a permanent basis. A secondary aim was to identify why new refugees decided to stay on in Glasgow and what could be done locally to encourage this.

The objective has been to seek to improve the process for refugees. Where the process has worked and there is evidence of good practice, then the research may be used to explore how this might be built on to encourage refugees to stay. Where practice has been poor, then this is highlighted so that it may be improved in the future.

Research Questions and Methodology

Information for this present study has been gathered in a variety of different ways, including:

- background information on refugees, obtained from 'desk top' research
- a survey of 50 refugees, using a semi-structured questionnaire
- a series of focus groups, and
- meetings with key professionals involved in the refugee process within Glasgow.

The core element of the research was the use of semi-structured, one-to-one interviews to obtain both the stories of refugees and some statistical data. The questionnaire was developed by a Project Steering Group made up both of refugees and people living in Glasgow who had close contact with the refugee communities. Administrative support was provided by Community InfoSource to arrange the interviews and support the researchers. The interviews were scheduled to take place in people's homes or, if preferred, at a local community facility.

The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- Personal information on the refugees, including age, country of origin, family structure, current accommodation, and employment status.
- The experience of getting refugee status and the length of time taken.
- Experience and use of services, including housing, social work, health, police and legal services.
- Language competence, the experience of learning English and use of interpreters,
- Experience of living in the community, including racism, membership of community groups and the development of friendships and social connections, and
- Longer term intentions, including the choice of remaining in or moving away from Glasgow.

The research team was made up of a Project Steering Group, which developed the initial proposal and the questionnaire, members of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees who managed the research on a regular basis, a university researcher who analysed the data and wrote the report, and most importantly, a team of 10 refugee researchers, who carried out the interviews and facilitated the focus groups. Following recruitment of these researchers, training was provided by Community InfoSource, a not-for-profit organisation within Glasgow, which works with refugees and minority ethnic groups. The training focused on questionnaire development, interviewing skills, cultural issues, ethical issues, methods of recording interviews, dissemination and, where necessary, IT skills.

Research Results

The picture which emerged from our research was of a population which is now relatively settled within Glasgow. Those people we interviewed had lived at their present address for over three years and had been in Scotland for almost five and a half. Children were attending local schools and individuals were increasingly involved in a range of community activities. Simply by being asylum seekers in Glasgow for such a long time, while waiting for the award of refugee status, had resulted in people beginning to put down roots.

Most refugees had only received status relatively recently, and so the numbers who had been able to make permanent arrangements were relatively small. The period of 28 days in which refugees were expected to sort out their affairs was far too short for most people and arrangements for some welfare benefits

took far longer to confirm. Nevertheless, most refugees now had appropriate benefits in place.

Housing

Housing was undoubtedly the main issue for refugee families. Many families were still living in the accommodation which they had first been allocated on their arrival in Glasgow as asylum seekers. They generally believed this housing to be inadequate both in terms of its size and its quality. Certainly, the descriptions of disrepair and dampness suggest that much of the housing is in poor condition, and some has now actually been demolished. In terms of house size, the research suggests that, in a number of cases, families were indeed living in overcrowded conditions.

Some of the comments made were:

We tried to paint the house [but] after a week, the dampness is back. Just the other day I noticed on my son's bed there was water, so I had to let him sleep in my bed, and I slept in the sitting room (45).

It's not healthy for children. All walls are in mould. I can't heat it properly – electricity bills are really high. It's very cold because of dampness (64).

I have a five year old boy, with whom I share the same bedroom (27).

It is too small and too old. I share the same room with my daughter and there is no storage. It's really bad for us (38).

Some refugees had been able to obtain better housing, sometimes with local housing associations, sometimes with private landlords and, in one case, through owner-occupation. Discussion at focus groups suggests that owner-occupation is a long-term ambition for many refugees, although it may not be a realistic option until they are in reasonably well paid employment. Many refugees spoke of having owned – and even having built – their own home in their own countries and they were uncomfortable with the practice of renting. But the level of awareness of housing options was limited and this suggests that refugees need guidance in making informed housing choices.

Employment

Employment was also problematic for refugees. Only 14 of our interviewees were working and many people spoke of their frustration at being unable to find suitable employment. Although the refugee workforce has many skills, few people have proof of qualifications as these have been lost during the move to the UK. In addition, the long period of asylum, during which asylum seekers are forbidden to undertake paid work, is a deskilling experience and, although work shadowing schemes have helped some people into jobs, refugee unemployment levels remain high or they are in jobs in which they cannot use skills brought from their home country. This has also had an impact in

preventing refugees from building up savings which they could use to buy a house or to invest for their future. Comments included:

It is very difficult to start a job after five years sitting at home. I hope Government will give job permission to asylum seekers from the beginning. So they can work while waiting for their decision (65).

We would like to work. We don't want to stay at home – we feel useless. We want to contribute in the society, we don't want to stay on benefits. There should not be discrimination for work, we should be equal, so please provide more jobs for us and where to find them (45).

Other experiences

Other aspects of life in Glasgow were viewed more positively by refugees. There were relatively high levels of satisfaction with the education service and families were generally very happy with the schools their children attended. Adults were making use of college education services, particularly in relation to English language classes. Health services were well used and refugees appeared happy with their GPs, with most families staying with the same practice since their original arrival in Glasgow.

Where use had been made of social work services, the police or lawyers, refugees believed that they had received the service that they required and had been treated fairly.

One aim of the research was to explore why some refugees had left Glasgow and if there were actions which might be taken to persuade them to stay. Better housing and job opportunities were seen as key to persuading potential movers to stay in Glasgow. Refugees continually stressed their desire for self-reliance, self-respect and independence and believed that these would only come with paid employment. Some other locations, such as the south of England, were seen as possibly offering better opportunities, especially in employment.

Most refugees, however, planned to stay in Glasgow and, although there had been some problems with racist incidents, around half of our interviewees felt safe in their local area. Three fifths of our interviewees had become involved with community groups and a similar number with faith groups or places of worship. There was a growing indication that refugees were making friends and building networks of support.

The position was summed up by one refugee who appeared surprised when asked if she had friends who would provide support. She replied:

I have lots and lots of friends here in Glasgow. This is my village now (5).

A number of refugees had started looking to the future. Some had begun to think about the actions which might be taken to improve the future lives of refugees and to encourage integration. In part, this was seen as a process of

educating Scots to have a greater awareness of why refugees were in the country in the first place.

Most refugees clearly saw their long-term future, and that of their children, as being in Scotland, and in Glasgow in particular.

I am very proud to be called Scottish and I love Scotland (17).

I hope I could do something to make life nice and easy in Glasgow because this city means a lot to me. Glasgow is my second home country (34).

Such statements are hopeful signs that long-term integration of refugees into Glasgow society is being achieved.

Recommendations

While there is some success to celebrate in the experience of refugees achieving status there is clearly room for improvement.

1. Right to Work

The Government must reinstate the right to work for all asylum seekers while they await a decision on their case.

This was withdrawn in a mistaken attempt to placate xenophobic fears of asylum seekers “stealing” jobs from indigenous workers. It has had no influence on the number of jobs available but has had a punishing effect on most asylum seekers and refugees.

The long period of enforced idleness has been isolating, demotivating and disabling and lies at the bottom of many of the difficulties faced by refugees once they receive status.

2. 28 days until support removed

The 28 day period to move from enforced dependency to independence is far too short. It is made worse by inefficient means of informing asylum seekers that they have been successful and it does not take account of the potentially disabling trauma such news can bring.

The period of time needs to be increased and consideration given to making the withdrawal of support transitional i.e. old forms of support should be withdrawn a little at a time and only as replacement forms come in.

3. Housing

The shortage of appropriate housing for refugees is part of the wider picture of the same housing shortage for other vulnerable groups in Glasgow.

There is no way around the need for Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government to begin quickly funding the building of more good quality, affordable social housing. This needs to include houses for larger families. Refugees will be helped as part of a general improvement for all. Such a building programme would also have an impact on unemployment.

The cap on the number of bedrooms that can be covered by housing benefit, as being suggested by the Government just now, is unacceptable.

More effective information and guidance on housing options and rights is also needed. See points 6 and 7.

4. Employment

28% of our sample of refugees was in some form of work (14 out of our 50 interviewees) which is a very high figure compared to other studies which show the real figure as nearer 8%. Presumably this is because our sample is skewed towards people who have some relationship with the community and who are more likely to be able to negotiate the system. However none of the 14 was working at a level which matched their actual skills.

These figures indicate a very low take up of skills brought by immigrants, which successive Scottish Governments have said they welcomed and in spite of the number of agencies attempting to facilitate this. The Scottish Government needs to address this issue, taking into account the needs of both refugees and employers in dealing with the barriers to refugee employment. The work of organisations like the Bridges Project in this field is to be commended and its good practice should be better funded and expanded.

The research for this project took place before the dramatic changes in the economy. Along with the rest of the population, it is likely that refugee employment is now lower than our research found. It is also likely that politicians will be even more sensitive than usual to raising the issue of refugee unemployment in a climate of increasing general unemployment.

The answer lies in taking action to increase general employment opportunities which will create employment for refugees also. A programme of social house building will create employment, not just in the building trades but in the spin off economy it will create. The approach of the Commonwealth Games should do the same at least temporarily. Other public works measures are within the powers of the Scottish Government to fund.

In the meantime the patient work of preparing refugees and employers by breaking down the barriers to refugee employment must continue and be expanded.

5. Language

The learning of English has been made more difficult for refugees because of the enforced idleness and isolation of the asylum seeker years. In spite of that, many have acquired basic communication skills of varying competence.

The higher levels of literacy skills needed to deal with officialdom and its forms and for many levels of employment, take longer to gain. This learning can be facilitated by involvement in work places, social intercourse and good quality ESOL courses. There are long waiting lists for these courses and there are also unemployed and under-employed graduates and teachers willing to do the job. ESOL provision needs to be expanded.

Further the sudden arrival of asylum seekers into refugee-hood suggests the need for specially tailored high intensity courses to suit their needs. Education authorities and further education colleges need to investigate this.

The good practice originally promoted by the Glasgow Asylum Seeker Support Project (GASSP), of the use of interpreters in education and health and of awareness of cultural and religious sensitivities, needs to be promoted in all local authority and national services and among employers and trade union organisations.

6. Information at the point of refugee status

Lack of information on options and rights in an intelligible and accessible form was a common complaint from our refugees.

We propose the compiling of an information pack in a range of languages, to be available in a hard copy and on the internet where it can be kept up-to-date. The pack should be supplied to all new refugees as they receive status and would be available on the internet in advance of this for those who want to be able to prepare.

Good formal information provision generates better informal dissemination through refugees' own networks of contacts and support. The group information sessions which have been provided by Scottish Refugee Council and Positive Action in Housing are a model of effective practice which could be replicated by other agencies and merits more funding.

7. Guidance

Under the New Asylum Model (NAM) caseworkers are responsible for informing their "clients" of the success or failure of their case. They are also responsible for informing successful refugees of the next steps they need to take.

Under the old asylum process, a successful refugee is no longer the responsibility of the Home Office and is left to fend for themselves. This deepening approach, leaving refugees to sink or swim, is a further disadvantage to people already burdened with problems of dislocation, years of enforced

idleness, new language difficulties, racism and possible traumas of personal experience.

We propose the employment of Refugee Advocates who would be responsible for the caseload of new refugees, be able to offer advice and guidance to their personal clients, in their own homes as well as from an office, be sensitive to cultural and religious needs, be aware of language needs and be able to offer a helping hand in the direction of independence and self-reliance. Refugees who have successfully negotiated the process might make good candidates for such posts. This approach has been successfully piloted in Birmingham.

All this costs money but we should no longer tolerate politicians telling us there is none. There was a bottomless pit to finance the invasion of Iraq, a country which was no threat to us and unimaginable sums of money have appeared to bale out the banks. None of the proposals above would cost the tiniest fraction of those sums.

Summary of recommendations

1. Reinstate the right to work
2. Double the 28 day period when support is withdrawn and make it transitional
3. Build social housing for all – including refugees
4. Public works projects for all – including refugees
Expand “preparing for work” training programmes for refugees and employers
5. Expand ESOL teaching
6. Information pack and website for all new refugees
Group information sessions to be replicated and funded
7. Refugee Advocates to be employed

The money is there, the need is there; the political will needs to be put there.

Time for some campaigning.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Developing the Research

Refugee movements across the globe have been common for many years and the United Nations Convention on Refugees, to which most members of the UN subscribe, dates from 1951. Within the UK, controls on immigration were not introduced until 1962 and the movement of refugees into the country, while requiring some management, did not appear to be politically contentious. The UK had no domestic asylum legislation, for example, until the 1990s and its introduction coincided with a growth in the numbers of refugees entering the country.

From the 1990s onwards, asylum has become a highly politicised issue and the media have played a part in influencing public attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees. The use of pejorative and sensationalist language in the tabloid press, for example, has created an extremely negative view of asylum in the public mind (Khan 2008), while in the south east of England, there were instances of local people taking to the streets to campaign against the dispersal of asylum seekers to their local area (Grillo 2005).

Asylum seekers have been treated quite separately from other immigrants to the UK and must apply for refugee status in order to remain here. Because of a fear that those whose applications are rejected will abscond, the asylum system contains the two highly contentious practices of detention and deportation. Within Scotland, 'failed' asylum seekers are frequently held at Dungavel, near Strathaven in Lanarkshire and the detention centre has been the focus of numerous protests.

Over relatively recent years, groups of refugees have been able to find sanctuary in Scotland, among them Chileans who were supported by the resources of the political left and Kosovans, who received enthusiastic support from a government who had gone to war in their country until it became politically expedient to tell them it was time to return home. But when the NASS asylum seeker dispersal scheme was introduced in 2000, it was against a background of government and media hostility. They had already been demonised as "bogus" and blamed for housing shortages and insufficient services in the south-east. Glasgow City Council put some effort and funds into institutional preparations (schools, housing, health services) but little into preparing the local residents in the high-rise flat areas, already the most deprived housing areas in the city, for the arrival of their new neighbours. The Scottish tabloids proved as adept at stirring up hostility as their southern counterparts and even the BNP saw an opportunity to do some leafleting in the city.

Sensing the real danger of a racist backlash, anti-racists in the city set out to build as widely inclusive a campaign to welcome the refugees as possible including trade unions, tenants associations, religious bodies, charities, campaigning politicians and lawyers, local activists and others. From inauspicious beginnings, by the time of the tragic murder of Firsat Dag in

August 2001, the community of Sighthill responded, locals and asylum-seekers together, by marching to the city centre under the banner of Sighthill United carrying placards reading:

“Against Poverty, Against Racism, Asylum Seekers Welcome”

They demanded (and won) a package of improvements for the area and went on to demonstrate at the Daily Record offices. The tabloid had carried particularly nasty coverage about the victim of the murder. Later the editor of the Daily Record was replaced and the editorial policy of the paper changed. Ordinary working class people from one of the most deprived areas of Europe had given the lie to the assumptions about them and their attitudes to race believed by the tabloids, politicians and far too many of our liberal intelligentsia.

This was followed by defence campaigns against the deportations of families and court cases which became high profile in the media, the Drumchapel High School “Glasgow Girls” who campaigned to defend their school friends against deportation and became media celebrities themselves, the very large demonstrations, supported by the STUC at Dungavel, and the residents of the Kingsway flats who organised a dawn watch for Home Office vans, threw a picket line across their doors and succeeded in turning back the Home Office snatch team and the police.

All this and more exhausting and brave campaigning was succeeding in shifting the political mood in Scotland in the direction of sympathy for the asylum seekers. To the extent that in recent years, the country has sometimes been portrayed as having a more positive attitude to asylum than England. This was highlighted most recently by a report in 2007 by the Institute for Public Policy Research, and we deal with this in Chapter Three. Of course, the fact that these differences in attitudes and approach exist has meant that asylum has remained politicised, as an area where Holyrood and Westminster are sometimes at odds.

But although asylum has clearly been an issue which has claimed the attention of politicians and the media, there has been relatively little focus on those asylum seekers who successfully negotiate the process and are granted refugee status and leave to remain in the UK. The Home Office ceases to collect statistics on refugees and they have the right to live and work here, on essentially the same basis as UK citizens.

To a very large extent, that is as it should be. We do not monitor or collect statistics on other groups within the population, other than during the decennial Census. But the very absence of information on refugees means that their needs may remain relatively unknown and local authorities and voluntary agencies are unable to provide appropriate support unless refugees come forward and ask for it. There is, in addition, very little research on how refugees negotiated the asylum process and what their experience of getting status has been.

It is for this reason that the present research project was developed, to interview refugees with status and to ask them about their experience of getting permission to stay, of obtaining housing, employment and welfare benefits, their use of services, and about how they were going about setting up home in the UK – this time on a permanent basis. A secondary aim was to identify why new refugees decided to stay on in Glasgow and what could be done locally to encourage this.

The objective has been to seek to improve the process for refugees. Where the process has worked and there is evidence of good practice, then the research may be used to explore how this might be built on to encourage refugees to stay. Where practice has been poor, then this will be highlighted so that it may be improved in the future.

It should be pointed out that the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees uses the term 'refugee' to cover all those who have sought refuge in the UK and in many circumstances, the distinction between 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' does not matter. However, UK legislation uses the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' in very precise ways to distinguish between those who have status and some form of leave to remain in the UK and those who do not. Because this research deals with the experiences of those who have made the transition from asylum seeker to refugee, it has been necessary to make a similar distinction when reporting on our research findings.

Plan of the report

The research report is structured as follows. Chapter Two provides some legal and policy background to the asylum process, including the process of applying for refugee status. Chapter Three then describes the rather limited research which has been done on the refugee experience in the UK.

The next two chapters focus on the current study. Chapter Four describes the methods used for collecting information, primarily a questionnaire survey conducted in person by refugee researchers – and a copy of the interview form is contained within the Appendices. Chapter Five presents the main research findings.

Finally, after a concluding chapter in Chapter Six, the report presents a series of Recommendations, for discussion.

CHAPTER TWO: LEGAL AND POLICY BACKGROUND

The British asylum system

Until the 1990s, the UK had no domestic asylum legislation. Most refugees arrived in the country through organised programmes with their refugee status already established. A number of refugee groups arrived in the UK as a result of political persecution, such as the Vietnamese 'boat people' who were seen as escaping Communism or Chilean refugees in the 1970s, fleeing the Pinochet regime. In the 1990s, Bosnian and Kosovan refugees moving to the UK aroused considerable sympathy as they were escaping from Serbian atrocities in a time of war (Sales 2007). Even though these groups were accepted - and indeed welcomed - within the UK, central government intervened in some instances, so that the Vietnamese, for example, were initially dispersed around the country so as to avoid establishing concentrations or 'ghettoes' of minority ethnic communities (Robinson *et al* 2003).

There was a change in the 1990s, with the arrival in the UK of significant numbers seeking asylum. The Government's response was essentially to separate out asylum from other aspects of immigration, often creating insecurity for those who were claiming it, and the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees was born. The 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act, for example, withdrew the right of asylum seekers to be considered homeless and to have a secure tenancy in social housing. The 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act withdrew cash benefits for asylum seekers, and this was followed in 2000 by the introduction of a system of vouchers, which asylum seekers could only exchange for food and other essentials. The system was highly controversial as it stigmatised asylum seekers, and was also expensive to operate. It was replaced in 2002 by cash payments through the Post Office, although this system too has been criticised (Refugee Survival Trust 2005).

The most wide ranging piece of legislation was the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act, introduced by the New Labour government. Subsistence levels for asylum seekers were set below the level of welfare benefits and they were excluded from applying for certain forms of benefit, such as Child Benefit. The Act established the National Asylum Support System (NASS), which became the new central agency supporting asylum seekers across the UK. Importantly, the Act introduced compulsory dispersal for those needing accommodation, to locations outside London and South East England.

During the period following 1999, Glasgow became the city which housed the largest number of asylum seekers in the UK. The City Council contracted with NASS to provide 2,500 units of accommodation every year for five years from April 2000 and established the Glasgow Asylum Seeker Support Project (GASSP). GASSP offer a lot of support themselves to asylum seekers, for example in regard to housing and education. They also have a partnership with Police and health providers (Barclay *et al* 2003). Further contracts for accommodation were later agreed between NASS and the YMCA and the Angel Group. NASS no longer exists in its previous form and is now part of the UK Borders Agency (UKBA).

Home Office statistics show that, at December 2007, Glasgow had 3,905 asylum seekers in UKBA accommodation. This was a reduction from a figure of 5,075 only nine months previously and the number has been falling in recent years as numbers of asylum seekers entering the UK have fallen. Within the city, most have been housed in the north of the city in estates such as Sighthill and Red Road, while there are also significant numbers in the south in Pollokshaws, and in the north west in Scotstoun. Most of the accommodation used for asylum seekers has been high rise flats which are in low demand.

Prior to 2002, asylum seekers had been allowed to work but this concession was withdrawn by the Home Secretary in July of that year. Asylum seekers became wholly reliant on benefits and were unable to take the opportunity to integrate through the workplace. A European directive (2003/9/EC) states that the main asylum applicant can apply for permission to work if they have waited more than 12 months for an initial decision by the Home Office on their asylum claim, if the delay in the Home Office's decision has not been their fault and if the claim for asylum is ongoing, even if it is now at the appeal stage. However, if permission to work is refused, there is no right of appeal, so the right to apply is perhaps of limited value.

It is worth recording here the complexity of the asylum and immigration regime in Scotland, because of the existence of devolved government. Legislation on asylum and immigration, as well as equality and human rights are matters for Westminster, and UKBA is Home Office based. Yet the agencies which deliver services to asylum seekers in Scotland, including housing, education, health and social services, are the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and Government. Refugee settlement and integration are also devolved matters, and the Scottish Government's Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (SRIF 2003) has produced an action plan to guide policy implementation and delivery of support services in this area.

The large numbers of asylum seekers entering the UK from the late 1990s onwards appear to have overwhelmed the Home Office and there were extensive delays in considering asylum cases. In many cases, asylum seekers have had to wait several years for a decision on their status and Sales (2007) points out that the uncertainty which is created is one of the most difficult aspects of living with immigration control.

In July 2006, the Home Secretary announced that there was a backlog of around 450,000 asylum claims in the UK which had not been resolved. To deal with this, the Home Office established the Case Resolution Directorate to clear what have become known as 'legacy' cases. The Home Office aims to have dealt with all these cases within five years. It is estimated that the number of legacy cases within Scotland involved around 1,450 families¹. Glasgow City Council decided it preferred to receive families rather than single asylum seekers and the city insisted on this, when renegotiating its second contract with NASS in 2005. When the Government started the legacy system in 2007,

¹ Personal communication from Scottish Refugee Council

reviewing the backlog of asylum cases, families were dealt with first before couples and single people.

Slightly earlier than this, in February 2005, the Government published a five year strategy for immigration and asylum including the development of a New Asylum Model (NAM). The main objective is to conclude an increasing proportion of asylum cases within six months, leading either to integration or removal. Cases are differentiated by 'type' and should be allocated to a single Home Office caseworker, located within regional asylum teams, two of which are based in Glasgow. The expectation is that, for general cases, the asylum decision would be made within 30 working days and, by the end of 2011, around 90 per cent of cases will be concluded within the six month target.

Refugee organisations, while welcoming certain aspects of the NAM, have expressed concern that the timescale may be too short to allow refugees to obtain good quality legal advice and support, and to allow lawyers to prepare their clients' cases.

In fact, a recent evaluation of the NAM by the National Audit Office (2009) suggests that, although the system is much improved, it will be difficult for the Home Office to achieve its targets. The evaluation noted that there had been an increase in asylum applications and the NAM was not well equipped to deal with these, risking the development of further backlogs. Where asylum seekers had failed in their applications, there had been no increase in the numbers being removed from the UK.

Getting status

For those asylum seekers who have been successful, either through the original system, through being considered as a legacy case, or through the NAM, there are several outcomes.

Refugee status is awarded to individuals who are recognised as refugees under the terms of the 1951 Geneva Convention. This gives individuals leave to remain in the UK for an initial period of five years. At the end of this period, it is usual to be granted *Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK (ILR)*, provided that:

- conditions in the refugee's home country have not improved significantly; and
- the refugee has not been involved in actions which are against the Refugee Convention principles.

Having Indefinite Leave to Remain means individuals are free from immigration control and there are no restrictions on their work or length of stay.

Some individuals may not meet the strict criteria of the Geneva Convention but it is recognised that, if they were removed from the UK, they would face a serious risk in terms of being killed or tortured in their own country. In such cases, individuals may be given *Humanitarian Protection*. Individuals with humanitarian protection are able to stay in the UK for five years, after which

time they may be granted Indefinite Leave to Remain if they still need protection.

For other individuals who did not meet the criteria of the Convention but whose cases disclosed compelling compassionate circumstances, there was an alternative form of immigration status called *Exceptional Leave to Remain in the UK (ELR)*. This could be granted in cases where it was judged that it would be unduly harsh to require the individual to leave the UK or because such a requirement would result in a breach of an international convention such as the European Convention on Human Rights. The Government abolished the status of ELR in late 2002.

In certain limited circumstances, individuals who are not recognised either as refugees or as being in need of humanitarian protection may be given *Discretionary Leave to Remain in the UK*. This leave may vary in length depending on circumstances but will not normally last longer than three years.

All individuals given leave to remain in the UK have the right to work, access housing and claim benefits.

Individuals who were previously supported by UKBA (formerly NASS) as asylum seekers have just 28 days from the day that they are told they have leave to remain, in which to claim benefits and apply for housing. The issues arising from this are discussed below in relation to Glasgow.

After getting status

Home Office concerns regarding the long term integration of refugees into British society were articulated in the report *Full and Equal Citizens: A Strategy for the Integration of Refugees into the United Kingdom*, published in November 2000. The Government stated its commitment to helping recognised refugees fulfil their potential both for their own benefit and for the benefit of the UK. To this end, funding was provided to refugee community organisations and the voluntary sector to provide support and advice for refugees on, for example, language tuition, education, re-training and employment opportunities.

In 2005, the Home Office published a follow-up document, entitled *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, in which it articulated the very specific needs of refugees. These needs included information, access to service provision, the achievement of potential (linked to effective communication and language skills), and community participation (helped by the bridge-building of refugee community organisations). The Home Office recognised the uncertainty surrounding rehousing, once status had been received, and pointed to legislation establishing a 'local connection' for the purposes of the homelessness legislation, between a former asylum seeker and the area in which they were provided with accommodation by NASS / UKBA. This legislation, however, only applies in England. Within Scotland, the NASS / UKBA accommodation is not deemed to give refugees a local connection; this only applies to the first permanent tenancy after receiving status.

There was also a recognition of the difficulties faced by refugees in arranging permanent accommodation and welfare benefits within the very short time period of 28 days. To assist and advise refugees therefore, the Government established a new initiative known as the SUNRISE² Project in Autumn 2005. In Scotland, this was co-ordinated by the Scottish Refugee Council. Project staff worked in partnership with housing providers, employers, government departments and local regeneration organisations such as Glasgow North Ltd³, to provide services to help refugees settle into life in Scotland, although the scheme worked only with refugees awarded status under the New Asylum Model, and not legacy cases. Individual caseworkers worked with families to create Personal Integration Plans to help the new refugees deal with the day-to-day challenges of modern Scottish life. Even after the initial 28 day period, caseworkers were available to advise and assist with any problems or crises that might have arisen during their first twelve months after being recognised as a refugee.

The new approach was not intended to replace the services and help that existed already in Scotland. Instead, SUNRISE was designed to help refugees take advantage of public services and to make sure that every refugee could access their rights and the opportunities available to them. The SUNRISE programme has now ended and is being succeeded by the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES), also funded through the Home Office.

Housing is perhaps the most important issue for refugees but many lack knowledge of the various options available. Two Glasgow not-for-profit organisations, Community InfoSource and mediaco-op have therefore launched an initiative entitled Door Step Equal Access, which is aimed at helping refugees and migrants to understand their rights and entitlements. The project uses a mix of research, training and participatory multi-media resources and in December 2007, a pilot DVD was launched entitled 'Paula's Story', recounting how refugees can manage to navigate the confusing maze of refugee housing rights; a user guide is also available for viewers. There remains, however, substantially more work still to be done on this project and additional funding is being sought.

In Glasgow, the majority of families who live in housing contracted to UKBA are in properties owned by the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA); this was previously City Council property prior to stock transfer. UKBA also now has contracts with the YMCA and the Angel Group, for the provision of 19 per cent of the accommodation.

When individuals and families receive Leave to Remain, they are assessed as homeless by the Council, because UKBA will shortly cease to pay for their housing. The Council has a duty to find housing for them but, as it has none of its own, it must procure this from a registered social landlord. Following stock transfer, the GHA has a duty to provide that housing to the local authority for homeless people, so the Council almost always procures housing from the

² Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services

³ The involvement of Glasgow North Ltd reflects the fact that most asylum seekers in Glasgow have been housed in the north of the city and may choose to stay there, after getting status.

GHA. Thus, in the case of those refugees already in GHA accommodation, families will generally be able to remain in their homes, which are redesignated as housing leased from GHA for temporary homeless accommodation. Refugees are asked to sign a temporary tenancy agreement (which is between the refugee and the Council) and become liable for payment of rent which includes furniture, Council Tax and utility bills for the first time. In practice, most refugees will claim Housing Benefit in the early days to cover these costs. Refugees are subsequently able to apply to any housing provider in the city for accommodation, ranging from their existing landlord (the GHA), to locally-based housing associations and the private sector. They have the same application rights as any other city resident.

Refugees who have been tenants of the YMCA or Angel Group are not able to stay in their accommodation, as the landlords in question do not have sufficient properties available, other than those contracted to UKBA. As a result, families are supported by Glasgow City Council to find temporary furnished accommodation. For legacy case refugees within GHA properties, the Glasgow City Council's Asylum Seeker Support Project (GASSP) has been providing this support. Single people, however, are in most cases housed temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation, and the quality of accommodation is often poor. The Council did previously run a number of hostels for single people but their closure has resulted in immense pressures on homeless services and the ability to source temporary homeless accommodation for single people.

Refugees are also able to apply for a range of welfare benefits, depending on their individual circumstances. Applications must be made through Job Centre Plus offices, operated by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP has established a Move On Response Team (MORT) in Glasgow to advise those who have been granted status and to help them to apply for benefits.

Importantly, those with status and therefore leave to remain in the UK are now able to undertake paid work and the DWP is able to assist refugees to find employment.

CHAPTER THREE: THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

Resettling refugees

Early research on the resettlement of refugees suggested that many did not necessarily see themselves as remaining in the UK. Carey-Wood *et al* (1995), for example, found that only 44 per cent of the participants in their research saw themselves as settling permanently in the UK; the majority believed that one day they would leave, presumably when it was safe to return to their home country. Those most 'unsettled' were the refugees who had experienced difficulties in gaining employment. Later, Bloch (2002) also found in her work in the London Borough of Newham that the majority of refugees in her sample had not chosen to come to the UK and did not wish to stay. Many refugees appeared quite isolated, having little contact with the host society.

Uncertainty about remaining in the UK was often closely related to delays in receiving refugee status. Spicer (2008) suggested that most asylum seekers were preoccupied with their unresolved asylum applications, some of which had been made several years previously. As a result, they were uncertain as to how long they would remain in the UK. Their children, however, who attended school and whose memories of their home countries were often hazy, saw the UK in positive terms, indicating that they hoped to settle.

For those who did settle, it was unclear as to whether they would remain in the area in which they were currently living. Carey-Wood *et al* (1995) estimated that between 1991 and 1993, 85 per cent of new refugees moved to London, so the pull of London was undoubtedly strong. However, their research was conducted before the increase in the numbers of asylum seekers in the late 1990s, the 1999 legislation and the establishment of NASS and compulsory dispersal. It might be expected that asylum seekers who were dispersed to a range of locations in the UK after 1999 might choose to stay there as they may have had little or no knowledge of other locations. There is, however, a lack of good data on the geographical mobility of refugees following a positive decision (Phillips 2006).

Unsurprisingly, employment and housing emerge as being of key importance for refugees, after they have received a positive decision. Bloch (2002) argues that being in employment is essential to allow refugees to integrate into society, while noting that those refugees most likely to be successful in gaining employment are male, with good language skills and likely to have been in the UK for a long time. Research in Australia into refugee employment (Wooden 1991) has suggested that high rates of unemployment are due to the scarring effects of asylum, linked to a lack of language proficiency and the need to 'catch up'.

This 'scarring' appears to be compounded by the inactivity forced on to asylum seekers by the UK asylum system, which does not permit them to undertake paid work. This enforced 'career break' following flight from their home country and a lack of UK work experience has led to high levels of refugee unemployment. Carey-Wood *et al* (1995) found that only a quarter of refugees

in their study were working, while two thirds of those seeking work were unemployed. Many of those unemployed were well educated with professional skills and qualifications and, although nearly half of their sample had participated in training other than ESOL⁴, this had clearly not guaranteed success in finding employment. As a result, many refugees accepted menial jobs for which they were over-qualified, simply in order to get into the job market (Field 1985).

The Department for Work and Pensions (2005) has accepted that refugee unemployment is too high, with refugees finding particular difficulties accessing the labour market in the early stages of transition from asylum seeker to refugee status. Jobcentre Plus has an important role to play in helping to support refugees during this period, although the DWP has also recognised the additional support which may be needed by refugees who worked at a technical or professional level before coming to the UK. Confirmation and validation of professional qualifications is difficult, where individuals may have no personal records of their achievement, and where they may also have to satisfy UK regulatory authorities (in relation for example to health services or teaching). A number of initiatives have been launched in recent years to help the integration of refugee professionals and those in Scotland are described below.

The second major area of concern for refugees is housing. Reporting on work undertaken by the Home Office through the European Refugee Fund and the Challenge Fund, Peckham *et al* (2004) identified housing as the main area that refugees felt needed improving in their lives. Carey-Wood *et al* (1995) noted that most refugees were accommodated in the social rented sector (37 per cent with local authorities and 20 per cent with housing associations), although a quarter were living in the private rented sector. Much of the housing was in poor condition and 41 per cent of those interviewed stated that basic repairs were needed; 28 per cent complained about the heating and 29 per cent said that the accommodation was too small for their families.

The relatively high proportion of refugees living in the housing association sector reflected the existence of a number of specialist associations in England, including the African Refugee Housing Action Group (ARHAG), An-Viet Housing Association and Refugee Housing Association, as well as a number of black and minority ethnic associations. All were registered with the Housing Corporation (Carey-Wood 1997).

Carey-Wood's research was prior to the 1999 legislation and the establishment of NASS. More recent research has been undertaken in England (Phillips 2006) and in Wales (Robinson 2006) into the transition from asylum seeker to refugee and this has revealed considerable problems in the provision of move-on accommodation. Once families receive refugee status, they must vacate their NASS / UKBA accommodation within 28 days, although the SUNRISE project has included trials to extend this period to three months. Phillips (2006) has shown that accessing the wider housing market is often difficult for refugees and many end up in temporary accommodation; the problem is particularly

⁴ English for Speakers of Other Languages

acute for single people who are over-represented amongst refugees and who may not be judged by local authorities to be in priority need.

The housing providers in Wales did not generally offer refugees the option of remaining in their accommodation on a temporary basis after receiving status, although one or two had begun to allow this to occur. Where move-on accommodation was not available within the timescale and refugees were unable to 'stay put', then families were moved into emergency accommodation or bed-and-breakfast. Robinson (2006) identified good practice in English cities like Leicester, where refugees are allowed to remain in their existing homes if they so wish, and another house is substituted into the stock allocated to UKBA. This is already the practice in Glasgow in relation to Glasgow Housing Association stock but it appears this practice is not necessarily widespread south of the border. It therefore adds to the uncertainties experienced by refugees during what is already a stressful period.

In the longer term, questions remain as to the extent to which refugees become 'integrated' into British society. Ager and Strang (2004) suggest that relationships are the core mechanism for securing integration, with refugees aspiring to a community in which there was active mixing of groups, acceptance of difference and diversity, and equality of access to services. But some refugees undoubtedly experience exclusion, harassment and hostility and this may mean that they feel unsafe outwith their local area. Spicer (2008), for example, has suggested that the lives of asylum seekers and refugees may be highly circumscribed within a small area, with adjoining areas and neighbourhoods perceived as excluding them.

Refugee community organisations (RCOs) may be of particular value therefore, in helping to prevent isolation and support refugees in establishing themselves. Field (1985) has argued that such organisations may possibly impede integration in that refugees may feel comfortable within their own groups, with less pressure to adjust and learn the language. But, on the other hand, RCOs are a resource for their members, providing practical and emotional support as they try to make their way in the wider society.

Some European research (European Economic and Social Committee 2002) has argued that integration is essentially about citizenship rights, with immigrants given rights, access to services and the opportunities for civic participation. While refugees may need specific services and support – at least initially – the main aim of public measures should be to ensure that doors are opened for them to share in the 'ordinary' areas of life. Demonising asylum seekers and refugees is not conducive to integration:

Little progress can be made if, while social organisations strive for integration, governments introduce asylum or immigration policies which criminalise, discriminate against or curtail the rights of immigrants and refugees. European societies must take on board that the best way to encourage social integration is to avoid any steps which generate social exclusion, entailing an overhaul of immigration and asylum policies (EESC 2002: 75).

Refugees in Scotland

The approach taken by the Scottish Government to asylum seekers and refugees has been somewhat different from that in other parts of the UK, where asylum seekers have often been viewed in a negative light. For example, in an explicit attempt to 'counter the negative perceptions that many people hold' (Charlaff *et al* 2004: 10), the Government (then the Scottish Executive) commissioned an audit of the skills, qualifications and aspirations of asylum seekers and refugees. This audit responded to the First Minister's comments in 2003 on Scotland's need for new immigrants. This approach is indicative of tensions between control of borders through asylum and immigration policy (the preserve of the UK Home Office) and Scotland's need for a supplementary labour force.

The problems associated with Scotland's population decline and the positive potential of increased migration are well known (Wright 2004). Further, the Fresh Talent Initiative launched by the Scottish Executive in 2004, to attract highly skilled working age migrants to Scotland (Burnside 2004), was a positive political statement about the value of immigration and permitted non-EU students graduating in Scotland to stay for a further two years in employment. However, a separate immigration policy for Scotland has not been considered possible because immigration and asylum remain under Westminster control.

The Scottish Government has increasingly adopted a more positive attitude towards inward migration, not least because campaigns against dawn raids began to have an impact on politicians. This has helped to create a climate in which migrant workers may be valued. The IPPR (2007), for example, has suggested that Scotland's more positive attitude is in stark contrast to that south of the border. It is possible that a focus on the opportunities presented by immigration, rather than on the difficulties, facilitates the integration process.

Some people argue that, in part, the positive approach taken by the Scottish Government may reflect the long history of immigration experienced by the country (and by Glasgow and Clydeside in particular). During the nineteenth century, refugees arrived in Scotland from various European countries (Edward 2008). The Irish were particularly significant, and in the mid-nineteenth century, around 18 per cent of Glasgow's population was Irish-born (Audrey 2000). On the other hand, no other part of Britain has a history of immigration coming anywhere near to that of London, both historically and contemporaneously and the Irish experience of immigration to Scotland, like that of others, has hardly been a happy one.

Audrey (2000) has argued that, in Glasgow and indeed in Scotland as a whole, multiculturalism has more prospect of success than in England, suggesting that the refugee population is more likely to become integrated within Scottish society. She believes that Scottish politics has not been racialised and right-wing parties like the BNP are weak. There is therefore a fairly wide political consensus supporting the Scottish Government's policies of challenging racism and promoting integration, such as its 'One Scotland, Many Cultures' campaign, which demonstrates an awareness of the need to build a more multicultural

Scottish society. Second, the Scottish dimension may also be important because Scots themselves may have multiple identities as both 'Scottish' and 'British' – or even 'not English'. Asylum seekers likewise may find themselves able to negotiate multiple identities as part of the integration process.

But the idea that Glasgow or indeed anywhere in Scotland is more multi-cultural than London or many other English cities, has to be questioned. London is one of the most multi-cultural cities in the world with the highest rates of mixed marriages, for example. The BNP may have marginal support but the number of black immigrants in Scotland is miniscule compared to London and London has the biggest, best organised and most active tradition of anti-nazi activity in the country, if not the world. Witness Cable Street in the 30s, the Anti-Nazi League in the 70s and Unite Against Fascism now. Further, Scots' "multiple identities" did not help them to integrate with Irish immigrants, Jews, Italians or even English people.

Audrey's view is echoed in recent research by Hussain and Miller (2004, 2005). They suggest that minority ethnic groups find it easy to identify with Scotland, primarily because their identities are cultural, rather than territorial. But insofar as there is a territorial dimension, it is Scottish rather than British.

There is evidence, though, that attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees have changed. There is, for example, an increasing recognition that they can fill some of the skills gaps existing within Scotland and that their presence is to be welcomed. The aforementioned series of high profile campaigns changed the political climate in Scotland. Indeed the film director Ken Loach has announced that he is to make a feature film to record the work undertaken by the local people in support of asylum seekers in the Kingsway flats in Scotstoun (*Herald* 12 January 2009).

The long-term integration of new refugees can be said to rely on two key elements. The first is political commitment at the highest levels in Scotland, and the role of the Scottish Government in making the case for inward migration and in combating racism has been extremely important

The second element relates quite simply to the length of time that refugees have been resident in Glasgow. As households begin to put down roots and as children in particular become settled in school, make friends and become more proficient in English, it becomes easier for white households (especially involving school friends) to see them as having a contribution to make to the local communities. When asylum seekers are threatened with deportation, this has then allowed local people to campaign on the asylum-seeker households' behalf, often achieving extensive publicity in the process. John Donaldson, Head of Immigration Services at Glasgow City Council has noted a significant shift in public attitudes:

There's been a sea-change in attitude in Glasgow. We used to get calls from Mr Angry saying 'why are these people taking our houses?' Now we get phone calls saying 'why is my neighbour being removed?' Now

people see asylum seekers as very good neighbours and very much part of the community (*Sunday Herald* 7 October 2007: 22).

Despite the more positive approach towards asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland, the transition to refugee status has not necessarily been easier than elsewhere. A study for the Scottish Refugee Council (Green 2006), for example, has shown high levels of destitution amongst asylum seekers, refugees and their dependents in Glasgow and, in the case of refugees, this was largely because they had received refugee status but had yet to access or receive mainstream support.

Housing, as noted in Chapter Two, is a key issue with refugees anxious to obtain good quality permanent accommodation. The West of Scotland Refugee Forum (2002), while welcoming the supportive stance taken by Glasgow City Council towards refugee resettlement, nevertheless pointed out that many refugees were housed in very poor quality accommodation, including private rented housing and hostels. Anecdotal evidence suggested that some refugees were still living in their UKBA accommodation over 12 months after receiving a positive decision. The backlog had been created partly by the high positive decision rate for refugees in Glasgow and partly by the lack of resources for Glasgow City Council to arrange move-on accommodation.

The position was confirmed in research undertaken for the Scottish Refugee Council by Netto and Fraser⁵. They found that refugees faced considerable difficulties in obtaining appropriate accommodation, both in terms of size and location. The lack of appropriate housing was leading many families to spend prolonged periods in temporary accommodation and the position was particularly problematic for refugees who had previously stayed in YMCA or Angel Group properties. Many refugees believed that they needed better independent and culturally sensitive information to enable them to negotiate the housing system, as well as ongoing support. The researchers highlighted the lack of mechanisms for assessing refugee tenant satisfaction in the long term and the need for the position of refugees in Scotland to be considered at a strategic level, involving the Scottish Government.

Most refugees in Scotland were housed by Glasgow City Council and, after stock transfer, by the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA); at present 81 per cent of asylum seekers in the city are housed by GHA. Unlike the position in England described by Carey-Wood (1997), there are hardly any specialist associations in Scotland catering for refugees. The only black and minority ethnic association is Access Apna Ghar, which is a subsidiary of Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and which manages a very limited amount of housing stock.

Housing was therefore one of the key areas for action identified by the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum in its Action Plan (SRIF 2003). SRIF proposed the development of a basic service specification offering local authorities assistance in structuring or tailoring their housing and support services to meet the needs

⁵ Netto, G. and Fraser, A. (2007), *Routes to refugee housing, support and settlement*, Glasgow: Scottish Refugee Council / AAGHAR. Unpublished report. Personal communication from SRC.

of refugees in their areas. This service specification was subsequently developed by Michael Bell Associates (2006).

In their report, they argued strongly for a multi-agency approach to meeting refugee housing needs, with the local authority as the lead co-ordinating partner. Participants in their study believed the 28 day period for obtaining accommodation was inadequate and there was an overarching need for advice and information. In seeking appropriate housing, refugees stated that they wanted to live in decent homes in areas which they regarded as safe from harassment or intimidation. Many participants had experienced such harassment, although few had reported it to the police. Finally, there appeared to be an enthusiasm to engage with the local population and to build relationships outside their immediate communities.

This desire to integrate with the wider community is echoed in the report by FMR Research (2008) on refugees and asylum seekers in the north of the city. The Glasgow Community Planning Partnership has ring-fenced resources able to support a range of projects aimed at helping integration and the FMR report sought the views of refugees and asylum seekers on the way forward.

Most of the refugee and asylum seeker participants believed they had good neighbours, although there were some concerns at the behaviour of local youths who were sometimes thought to be threatening. Participants made a range of suggestions for facilitating integration, including social clubs, youth clubs, sports-related clubs and activities, women's support groups and more English classes.

The ability to work emerged as a particular issue for men. Many men believed they should be able to contribute to society and to their families and so the creation of routes into employment was an ongoing issue for them.

There are already a number of schemes operating within Glasgow, aimed at assisting refugees into the workforce. The Bridges Programmes, for example, funded by the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, the European Social Fund and Big Lottery, arrange work shadowing and work experience placements with a range of employers. Work shadowing is a recognised way for individuals to observe the work of others and gain first hand experience of working practices and systems in this country. In relation to asylum seekers and refugees, it provides an opportunity to re-enter the work and professional environment from which they might have been excluded for some time. It helps integration and prepares refugees for a return to work. One of their very successful programmes is "Equipped for the Future, Preparing for the British Workplace" which provides tailored and intensive support. In 2008, 33% of the Bridges' clients entered employment. The Bridges Programme also identifies a frequent need for additional English language support at the point of a refugee receiving status and the need for clarification and standardisation on payment for furniture packages in homes, when a refugee enters employment.

While the Scottish Refugee Council no longer offers specific advice on employment and training issues, it does host a support project for refugees who

received status after 1 October 2008, through the New Asylum Model (not for those through the legacy system). This is called the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES).

In the medical profession, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) offers a comprehensive support package to assist doctors who are refugees and asylum seekers to become registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) and thus be in a position to compete for posts in the NHS, within the UK. The programme operates in the west of Scotland, and applicants are assessed by the Deanery of NHS Education Scotland, to assess their previous training and qualifications, and to establish a plan for future training needs.

Another related programme is Glasgow Overseas Professionals into Practice (GOPIP), set up by Glasgow Caledonian University in October 2002, in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Health. The project developed in response to the shortage of nurses and midwives within the NHS in Scotland and a recognition of the skills and expertise within the refugee communities, which might be harnessed to address these shortages. GOPIP has a Scotland-wide remit and is jointly funded by NHS Education Scotland and Queens Nursing Institute Scotland. The University provides academic support and clinical supervision of the nurses on the programme, including support through the process of registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

In teaching, there exists the Refugees into Teaching in Scotland (or RITeS) project, based at the University of Strathclyde. It aims to assist refugees with a teaching qualification obtained overseas, enter the teaching profession in Scotland. The University operates a refugee teacher database and works with education authorities to support, assist and mentor refugee teachers

Conclusions

In summary, the key problems for refugees identified by previous research relate to accessing employment after a long period of enforced exclusion from the job market while an asylum seeker; access to appropriate housing; and long-term integration into local communities and the acquisition of citizenship.

The process of becoming a refugee was also identified as problematic in that the 28-day period for arranging benefits and permanent housing was seen as unrealistically short.

These previous research findings have informed our own work and we deal with these issues in our interviews with refugees in Glasgow.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Information for this present study has been gathered in a variety of different ways, including background information on refugees, obtained from 'desk top' research, a survey of 50 refugees, using a semi-structured questionnaire, a series of focus groups, and meetings with key professionals involved in the refugee process within Glasgow, including staff in the Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow City Council and the Bridges Programme.

As noted earlier, the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees normally uses the term 'refugee' to cover all those who have sought refuge in the UK. Because this research deals with the experiences of those who have made the transition from asylum seeker to refugee, it has been necessary to make a similar distinction when reporting on our research findings and so the term 'refugee' is used here to mean an individual with leave to remain in the UK.

Importantly, the interviews with refugees were conducted by other refugees. This approach has been shown to have a number of advantages (Mestheneos 2006). Participation in the research can be a valuable professional experience, enhancing skills and boosting self-esteem. And, in addition, there is satisfaction in working on a project which has the ability to influence policy and practice and benefit others. We also found that refugee researchers have a clearer understanding of the issues facing other refugees.

This 'peer research' approach, in which individuals are interviewed by their 'peers', has been used successfully in other studies. Within Glasgow, Roshan (2005) assessed the health needs of refugees and asylum seekers in north Glasgow using peer researchers, suggesting that they gained both professionally and personally from their involvement in the work. In London, Dumper's (2002) skills audit of refugee women for the Mayor of London's office used other refugee women to carry out the interviews. Dumper suggests that barriers arising out of a mistrust of strangers and people in authority were overcome, and the exercise helped to empower those refugee women who became involved.

Background information

It is extremely difficult to obtain data on the numbers of refugees living in Glasgow, post-status, as no comprehensive monitoring takes place. This is, in many respects, as it should be, given that those with refugee status ought to be treated on the same basis as anyone else with the right to live in the UK. It does, however, make it difficult to identify those individuals with status who still require support.

The research has sought, as far as possible to collect information on the number of refugees in Glasgow, where they are currently living and the length of time which it took to obtain status.

Identifying potential researchers and interviewees

At an early stage, a database was established of potential researchers and interviewees, relying on word of mouth and the personal knowledge of those involved with the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees. Basic details were recorded, including:

- names and contact details
- country of origin, including the region of the country and / or the ethnic or tribal group (this could have been important, particularly in the case of conflict between groups within the country)
- languages that are spoken fluently
- gender and age
- family size
- area currently lived in

Names for the data base were obtained from contacts known to members of the Research Project Steering Group, contacts obtained through Framework for Dialogue⁶ meetings and others suggested by these initial contacts. In this way, the database 'snowballed'. Individuals were asked to record basic information about themselves on a short form (see Appendix Two), and these forms were used when identifying the sample. Our sample was not therefore a strictly random one but we tried as far as possible to be as wide ranging as possible in terms of country of origin, gender, age and household structure.

There was considerable publicity about the project with two meetings held to inform refugees, to recruit potential researchers, and to identify individuals willing to be interviewed. Two launch events were held in central Glasgow.

For potential interviewees, we focused on individuals and families who had received status recently or during the last eight years. In addition to basic information, we therefore recorded the date that status was received and the approximate time individuals had spent in the UK before status was granted.

In selecting our interview sample from the database, we sought, as far as possible, to interview refugees from a range of different countries or communities, refugees who had waited different lengths of time to receive status, and refugees of different ages. We also sought to have a reasonable gender balance. Our sample size was 50 and we included both refugees who had received status and were living in Glasgow, and also some (six in all) who had left the city.

Prior to the interviews, an information sheet was drawn up for researchers to give to interviewees. This provided basic information about the project, its aims and objectives, and how the results would be used, and emphasised the confidentiality of the interview process. The GcWR did, however, suggest that

⁶ The Framework for Dialogue Project is funded by the Scottish Government and run by the Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council. It aims to provide a forum for asylum seekers and refugees to influence social policy and planning of services at a local level. There are currently eight groups operating in dispersal areas and a citywide forum which campaigns on national issues such as asylum seekers' right to work.

it might approach some individuals with a view to gaining consent to publicise some individual stories, if they were thought to be particularly effective in illustrating the refugee experience. Such stories would, of course, only be used with consent.

Recruiting and training researchers

The researchers were recruited by asking volunteers to complete application forms and each potential researcher was interviewed to determine their suitability, using a job description and person specification. In total, 10 researchers were recruited. Four were male and six female. Two of the researchers were Algerian and two Sudanese; the other six were from Zimbabwe, Iraq, Ghana, Cameroon, Somalia and Azerbaijan. The range of countries of origin meant that we were able to use a wide range of languages during the interviewing process.

Following recruitment, training was provided by Community InfoSource, a not-for-profit organisation within Glasgow, which works with refugees and minority ethnic groups. The training focused on questionnaire development, interviewing skills, cultural issues, ethical issues, methods of recording interviews, dissemination and, where necessary, IT skills.

The training also sought to provide support in terms of confidence building for the researchers, in order to enable them to carry out the interviews. In addition, emotional and/or counselling type support was available in case the interviews and focus groups raised difficult and painful issues for the researcher and/or interviewees.

Each researcher was asked to volunteer for 5 days. They received a travel allowance and a subsistence payment per day.

The interview process

The research used semi-structured, one-to-one interviews to obtain both the stories of refugees and some statistical data. The questionnaire was developed by a Project Steering Group made up both of refugees and people living in Glasgow who had close contact with the refugee communities. Administrative support was provided by Community InfoSource to arrange the interviews and support the researchers. The interviews were scheduled to take place in people's homes or, if preferred, at a local community facility.

The interviews lasted about an hour, with an additional 30 minutes allowed for translation if required. Researchers transcribed from their notes and processed the interview, using local computer facilities which they were able to access. This was time-consuming and each interview was therefore assumed to take about one day to arrange, conduct and complete. As an appreciation of their giving time and sharing their experiences, a token to the value of £10 was given to the interviewees.

A copy of the questionnaire used in the interviews is at Appendix Three.

After completion, the questionnaires were checked by GCtWR, before being passed to the University of the West of Scotland for analysis.

The Project Steering Group was very aware of the importance of equal opportunity issues and the need for inclusiveness. Particular barriers to participation in the research which were identified included language, travel difficulties, and childcare responsibilities, as well as the difficulties in talking about the sensitive issues raised by the experience of being an asylum seeker and refugee.

During the research, we attempted to overcome the language barrier by:

- where possible, matching interviewees with researchers who spoke the same language;
- providing interpreters where this was not possible;
- providing interpreters at focus groups and the dissemination launch;
- providing the information and consent sheets and, if possible, a summary of the project report in community languages.

The barrier of travel difficulties was overcome by holding interviews either at the interviewee's house or another convenient location close to it. We were prepared to provide childcare for focus groups and other meetings if this had been required but it proved to be unnecessary. We sought to overcome the barrier posed by sensitive issues by providing appropriate training for researchers.

Focus groups

Prior to the research starting, a focus group was held in the Scotstoun area of Glasgow, facilitated by three refugee researchers and attended by 11 refugees from a wide range of backgrounds, selected from our database. A member of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees was also present as an observer. The group discussed a range of issues but it became clear that refugees' greatest concerns related to their housing circumstances, to delays in receiving benefits and to experiences of harassment and anti-social behaviour. These issues coloured refugees' views of Glasgow and so housing and problems with harassment in particular areas were seen as being negative aspects of living in the city. Positive aspects included educational provision (from school to college and university), the friendliness of many people and the opportunities presented by the city.

While refugees acknowledged that they had received support from various organisations, including the Scottish Refugee Council, Positive Action in Housing, the Citizens Advice Bureau, community groups and local job centres, experiences had been varied and refugees clearly felt that some organisations had been more helpful than others. Many individuals spoke of a lack of information, particularly in relation to employment, services and utility costs (such as electricity and gas), benefits and the tax system (including both Council Tax and tax credits). Often, these were areas of which, as asylum seekers, they had had no experience.

The record which was taken of this initial focus group allowed us to ensure that the questionnaire would cover these issues raised by the refugees.

At the conclusion of the research, two further focus groups were held to tease out further information on certain key issues, which were of greatest concern to refugees; these were housing, employment and welfare benefits. These focus groups were held in the offices of Positive Action in Housing, in central Glasgow. The first focus group discussed housing issues and was attended by five refugees, in addition to two refugee researchers who acted as facilitators; a member of GCtWR and the university researcher were present as observers. The second focus group was attended by eight refugees plus two refugee researchers as facilitators and a member of GCtWR was again an observer.

The discussion on housing confirmed that many refugees were unhappy with their houses, usually because of either overcrowding or the poor quality of the accommodation. There was a substantial discussion regarding the extent of refugees' knowledge of the housing system and it became clear that there was a need for much improved information about housing and, in particular, the application process. The focus group also explored the long term aspirations of refugees and it became clear that many had ambitions to own their own homes in the future. Some stated that they were uncomfortable with renting, as this was not something they had been used to.

In relation to employment, focus group participants referred to the deskilling experience of being an asylum seeker and unable to work. This lack of direct work experience was a significant problem when trying to secure employment after receiving status. Skills and expertise had been lost and individuals themselves were up to ten years older than when they first arrived in the UK. As a result, they were closer to the end of their working career and more likely to experience age discrimination.

Many refugees had undertaken voluntary work, often with their cultural associations and this had helped individuals in gaining the confidence to apply for jobs. But the current recession has allowed employers to be highly selective in appointing staff and unemployment is rising. Refugees therefore saw themselves as being in a very disadvantaged position.

There was also a concern that many refugees were unclear as to the implications of taking a particular job, in terms of the impact on benefits. Many of the jobs offered to refugees are insecure and if refugees become unemployed, it can take a considerable time to have benefit reinstated. This led on to a broader discussion about the benefit system, which most found confusing.

Many focus group participants had experienced significant delays in receiving benefits, and in particular child benefit. Sometimes these delays were due to the absence of children's birth certificates which many people had been unable to take with them, when fleeing their home country. Staff did not appear to be well briefed on how to deal with this situation.

It was very difficult for people to bridge the gap between the ending of Government support which they had received as asylum seekers and the start of the standard unemployment benefit; 28 days was seen as being too short a period. In some circumstances, crisis loans were available but these did not appear to be offered routinely and again could take several days to be received. There was a general lack of information on benefit entitlement and, although some agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau were helpful, they were overstretched and under-resourced.

CHAPTER FIVE: REFUGEES IN GLASGOW

Introduction

This chapter describes the results of the questionnaire survey, supplemented by information from the focus groups. The chapter is divided into sections dealing with different aspects of the questionnaire.

In order to illustrate the views of refugees, we use a number of quotations from the responses which refugees gave us, but these are anonymised and are identified only by a reference number.

In line with our aims, we interviewed some refugees who had already moved away from Glasgow. Of the 50 people interviewed, 44 were still living in the city; the other six were living in Edinburgh (2 refugee households), London (2), Portsmouth and Renfrew.

In terms of the gender of our interviewees, 28 were male and 22 were female, so we achieved as reasonable a balance as was possible within the constraints of refugee availability. Within the initial focus group of 10 people, there were four males, five females and one transgendered person.

The average age of interviewees was 38. All but four people were aged under 50, although the information was not available for a further four. This is perhaps as expected, with younger people being more mobile and so more able to move elsewhere in search of asylum.

In relation to country of origin, we achieved a wide spread of interviews, as shown in Table 5.1 below. There were, however, some countries from which refugees have come to Glasgow and where we failed to identify potential interviewees, including Afghanistan and China.

Country	No of interviews	Country	No of interviews
DR Congo	8	Zambia	2
Iraq*	7	Zimbabwe	2
Ivory Coast	4	Albania	1
Pakistan	4	Egypt	1
Algeria	2	Eritrea	1
Azerbaijan	2	Nigeria	1
Iran	2	Russia	1
Rwanda	2	Sri Lanka	1
Somalia	2	Sudan	1
Syria (Palestinian)	2	Uganda	1
Turkey*	2	Ukraine	1

* Note: Two of the Iraqis and one Turkish interviewee were Kurds and therefore regarded themselves as belonging to Kurdistan.

Personal Information

On average, refugees had lived at their present address for a little over three years, although the period ranged from 6 weeks to seven and a half years. In 30 cases, households were living in the accommodation which had first been allocated to them (as asylum seekers) by NASS / UKBA; the remaining 20 people had moved to another property. Many of these moves were to another Glasgow Housing Association house but a number of people had found accommodation with other housing associations or in the private sector. The statistics suggest that refugees are beginning to take control of their own housing, by moving to a range of different types of accommodation; this is discussed more fully later in the report.

The refugees whom we interviewed had mostly lived in Scotland for quite some time, in periods ranging from 9 months to eight years. The average length of stay was 5 years and four months, long enough perhaps for many households to feel settled in the city. Only two households had lived elsewhere in Scotland, one in Edinburgh and one in Aberdeen, although there had often been considerable movement within Glasgow, post-status. Sometimes this had been a consequence of housing demolitions, for example in the Sighthill area.

Refugees had lived in the UK, on average, for a little over 6 years – longer than they had actually lived in Scotland. In total, 24 households had spent some time in England, 19 of them in London, although this may have been for a very short period following their arrival in the country. Other places where refugees had spent time included Oxford, Sunderland, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Kent, Bournemouth and Watford.

In the majority of cases (37 households), the entire family was living in Glasgow. But many people had relatives elsewhere, sometimes in the UK (notably London and Birmingham) and sometimes in their home country. Although households made strenuous efforts to maintain contact, this could prove difficult and expensive.

My husband and daughter [are] still in Africa. We speak on the phone but not so often because of cost (17).

I still have the rest of my family hiding in DRC and wish to bring them here with me in Glasgow. Yes, we are in regular contact with them through the phone call and mails sending time to time (32).

Yes I am here with all my entire family, my wife and my two sons. But the rest of the family is back home. And I just lost my mother last year and I couldn't even go back for the burial because my asylum case was pending with the Home Office – and other members of the family died during the tsunami in Sri Lanka (66).

All but nine of the refugees interviewed had been working before they came to the UK, undertaking a range of different jobs. Ten had worked in business, with a further five in finance or business administration. Eight had been teachers, six

had worked in shops or hairdressers, four as doctors or nurses and two had been engineers. Refugees therefore brought to Scotland considerable skills.

Not all spouses had worked, as many had been involved in bringing up children. But 22 stated that they had been working in their home country, with three in business, three in teaching, three in engineering, two in retailing and two in the civil service.

Despite the skills which refugee families possessed, most had found it extremely difficult to obtain employment once they had received status and only 14 refugees interviewed were working. Many believed that the period of being an asylum seeker, when they were not allowed to undertake paid work, had been a de-skilling experience.

It is very difficult to start a job after five years sitting at home. I hope Government will give job permission to asylum seekers from the beginning. So they can work while waiting for their decision (65).

As an asylum seeker, you are not allowed to do anything, then after one week, they ask you suddenly to go out and work, and do everything for yourself (Focus Group participant).

As a result of this enforced absence from the job market, some refugees were now in quite low paid jobs such as cleaning, although a few others had managed to secure more professional employment, for example as social care workers. Several individuals were doing a mixture of paid and voluntary work with advice agencies and credit unions, in part because these organisations had previously been helpful and supportive to them – and they were now seeking to repay this.

Yes, as a social care worker with the Glasgow City Council in a care home in town. Got job because a friend of mine working with the Glasgow City Council who advised me to look on the website and to look for an application and vacancies there and I find the vacancies and I applied (69).

In some cases, work shadowing schemes had helped individuals to find work, for example the Bridges Programme and the programmes for refugee doctors and nurses.

Yes, I am working part-time in a key store where I do keys and shoes work. I have done a training with the Bridges Programme and then after that they find me a job at that small company in town, where they do key and shoe repairs (66).

In Gartnavel General Hospital. I got job through SRC training programme with NHS (19).

But often, there was considerable frustration regarding the difficulties in accessing employment.

The experience to look for work is bad, because I was doing a lot of voluntary work before I got my status, empowering the communities and promoting integration amongst BME, asylum seekers and refugees with the host community. When I got my refugee status, my CV was really good, but I wanted office work. I wanted to be a link between the refugees and the workers because the refugees are open to their fellow refugees. They think we don't know anything. It's so difficult to get a decent job, something that we are entitled to. We want them to give us a chance (14).

There should be more jobs available to encourage people off benefits. The employers should also stop asking for experience before accepting people for work (39).

We would like to work. We don't want to stay at home – we feel useless. We want to contribute in the society, we don't want to stay on benefits. There should not be discrimination for work, we should be equal, so please provide more jobs for us and where to find them (45).

Just to say that it's still so difficult for refugees from Africa to access the employment sector here in Glasgow ... The employment policy needs to be changed and facilitate the real integration of refugees (50).

The difficulties which refugees have clearly faced in obtaining work must be a matter of concern. The European Economic and Social Committee (2002: 72), for example, argues that employment is crucial for refugees, 'since work is the means by which individuals secure the resources they need to obtain other goods, and is also the main link in social relations'. This report notes that housing is also fundamental and good community relations lie in the avoidance of refugee 'ghettoes'.

Getting Status

All but one family had been living in Glasgow at the point at which they received status. The majority of those interviewed (44 individuals) had received Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) within the UK. A further four had been given 'refugee status' and so were presumably in a position to apply for ILR within a period of five years. One person had received Humanitarian Protection and one Discretionary Leave to Remain.

Most people had had to wait some considerable time for their case to be resolved. On average, individuals had waited almost exactly five years, with some waiting as long as seven years. Most had received status only within the previous year which reflects the fact that the backlog in dealing with asylum cases had only recently been tackled effectively by the Home Office.

While refugees were obviously delighted to receive status, it was to be expected that a number of difficulties would arise. These difficulties reflect the very short

28-day period, in which refugees have to organise permanent accommodation and various welfare benefits.

Most refugees had received some form of support after they received status, with only 11 stating that this was not the case. Organisations which were mentioned included the Job Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, the City Council's Asylum Support Team, local housing associations, and the Scottish Refugee Council (and the SUNRISE project located within it). Voluntary organisations such as Karibu, which works with refugee women, were also very important sources of support.

The support which refugees had received was generally useful and most refugees appeared to believe that the support was probably as good as it could be. In focus groups, however, there were a lot of complaints about receiving inadequate information. Sometimes problems only emerged later in the process, as situations arose which refugees lacked the knowledge to deal with. Those interviewees who complained about information gaps tended to be those who were still struggling because of delays in sorting out benefits, obtaining employment and arranging permanent accommodation.

Perhaps the main difficulty which has faced advice agencies has been in providing support to refugees which is actually enabling, in that it allows them to understand the systems with which they need to work in the future. Some refugees remarked on how 'everything' had been done for them as asylum seekers in that they were often seen as the passive recipients of services. Now, they needed to take control of matters themselves.

The support I received was useful and helpful but ... I need to understand first how this system works. Some support workers and social workers are not helping people understand the system. You have to work and go around in the system [if] you are a stranger and you don't even understand the language (5).

I was a newcomer in the welfare system after been supported by the Glasgow Asylum Team and NASS and now, as a refugee, I can say that the support I received was useful for me first to understand the system and then to know what and where to go in case I need anything else (68).

In terms of the content of the advice which refugees had received, most of the gaps identified appeared to be – as expected – in relation to housing, with some people also mentioning employment and benefits. Where refugees had had access to friends, they had been directed towards the most appropriate support and advice. Also, during the course of this research, Positive Action in Housing had been running housing information sessions for groups of new refugees, to try and provide better information on housing options.

One particular problem was the fact that, in all but three cases, refugees reported that the information they had received was in English and not in their

own language. Nineteen individuals felt this was not overly problematic as they spoke English well but 25 other people had not always found the advice clear.

The information I received was in English and not in Arabic, so I couldn't know how to manage without friends and family help (67).

Even those who spoke English in their own country had struggled with the administrative 'jargon' in some official forms.

Yes, as I came from Zimbabwe where the British were present, so I could read but not really understand the administrative literacy in those forms (69).

Issues facing refugees, post-status

Housing

By far the most problematic issue identified by the refugees has been housing – identified by 22 of those interviewed. The legal position is that, once a family receives refugee status, then at the end of the 28 day period, they are no longer the responsibility of UKBA and cannot remain in accommodation which has been contracted to UKBA. They become officially homeless and are eligible to apply for accommodation through the local authority, under the homelessness legislation. In fact, within Glasgow, the vast majority of asylum seekers have been housed in Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) property and in practice, families have been allowed to remain in their existing (UKBA contracted) accommodation, after receiving refugee status, so as to minimise the disruption which would be caused by an enforced move. They are asked to sign a temporary tenancy agreement pending a decision on their permanent accommodation. If they decide to remain in their present house on a permanent basis, they would sign a secure tenancy agreement. In order to ensure that the correct number of contracted properties is available to UKBA for further asylum seekers, the GHA offers alternative and equivalent property to UKBA.

Because of this practice of allowing refugees to remain in their existing property on a short-term basis, more than half the refugees interviewed had not moved since receiving status, although 20 families had moved elsewhere. While there are very good reasons for the practice, however, a number of refugees felt frustrated by the fact that they were being asked to remain in accommodation which they often felt was sub-standard. Some felt they had insufficient information to decide what to do and others felt that they were being denied choice.

I want to change the house but I did not find enough information. I am still in NASS accommodation (22).

No. I was given a choice, stay and sign temporary occupancy or go to the homeless shelter (14).

When I got married I shifted with my husband. I am living with my husband in Govan, the house is on the fourth floor, it's very difficult to use the stairs – especially as I have problems with my legs. When I was an asylum seeker, I thought I didn't have a choice, but till now nothing has changed. They are not giving me any hope. I have problems with neighbours. I feel so much stressed because of this problem. Even though I have status, I don't feel happy with my life (12).

One particular problem raised in focus groups related to the issue of rehousing when property was demolished. In the last two years, some high rise housing in areas such as Sighthill has been demolished. When this has happened, those families with a permanent tenancy (usually white people) were offered alternative permanent housing with tenants being able to exercise a degree of choice. Refugees living in the area but who may still have had a temporary tenancy were moved to an alternative house, but were unable to exercise much choice during the process; this was thought to be unfair and discriminatory.

A number of families felt that the system was very slow and they had had to wait a long time to receive paperwork from the Council confirming their homelessness status.

My flat is really wet and damp. I am waiting for the Refugee Team to come and check my flat and give me the 'homeless' letter. But they don't come for four months (64).

I applied to so many housing associations but they kept me in the waiting list and they asked me for some documents from the City Council that I am homeless, but my housing supervisor didn't provide me with that letter till now (20).

Those who had sought alternative accommodation had found the system for applying for a house very confusing. Partly, this seemed to stem from the large number of local, community-based housing associations within the city, each with their own allocation system. Refugees were, of course, entitled to apply to any one of them but many are relatively small and appeared not to have appropriate accommodation readily available. Some refugees were also seeking a house in areas where there was little social housing available, for example in some central areas of the city and near the mosques, and where they stood little chance of obtaining it. This may reflect a lack of local housing knowledge and a need for better housing advice.

I still have not got a house. I applied to eight housing associations but none of them was able to help me to date. I have no job. I am getting frustrated (27).

Housing is another problem – we have to apply to many housing agencies. They think the NASS house is a house but it's not our choice; we want to choose our own house and area (57).

There were also particular problems faced by refugees who had been housed by two smaller landlords in Glasgow with whom UKBA has a contract, namely the YMCA and the Angel Group. Because these landlords had only limited housing stock, asylum seekers were obliged to move out into temporary furnished accommodation once they had received refugee status, until such time as they could be rehoused. This practice proved very unpopular with refugees.

When people get status, I wish Angel could just extend their time in temporary accommodation as I found it very hard. It traumatised my kids so much (13).

Refugees were asked if they were still experiencing housing difficulties. In all, 38 refugees cited ongoing problems, while 12 had no major problems with their housing. By far the most common problem, cited by 15 people, was a belief that they were 'stuck' in the house in which they had lived as asylum seekers and that it was taking too long to find an alternative property.

At the moment I am still waiting for a house as promised by the organisation. We are still living in a high flat in Cardonald and they have told us that it was just temporarily for a couple of weeks and now we have almost spent more than three months here (32).

Wherever I applied there is a long waiting list. I made five applications and still waiting (49).

The difficulties faced by refugees in relation to their accommodation stem in the main from their homeless status. Being classified as homeless ensures that refugee families become a priority in relation to the allocation of housing, but the accommodation which is vacant and immediately available to families – as with any homeless family – is often in low demand areas. These are frequently the very same areas where refugees are already housed, being the areas where low demand vacant housing has been contracted to UKBA. The situation in Glasgow, as in other local authorities, is exacerbated by the sale of council houses, where properties of high quality and in more 'desirable' parts of the city have been sold under the right-to-buy. Thus, the pool of properties which is available to offer to refugees is limited; this situation appears not to be well understood and may reflect the lack of information on housing options about which several individuals complained.

Although there was a general dissatisfaction as to the choices offered to refugees, there were also a large number of very specific complaints about the housing in which many interviewees lived. These are discussed in more detail later in the report.

Welfare benefits

A number of other issues were raised by refugees. In all, 37 people stated that they had managed to sort out their welfare benefits, although the application process had proved difficult for nine people. It appeared that the key issue for

most individuals was the 28-day timescale as this was thought to be far too short to allow refugees to make all the necessary arrangements. There were particular problems if families were receiving several different benefits, such as Income Support, Child Benefit etc.

The difficulty I found after I received status was accessing housing. I was in an overcrowded house. I signed to temporary occupancy, renewal every week and a long waiting list. Another difficulty was benefits. You become destitute, NASS money stops after 28 days from the day you get the status. You are left two to three months without income and child benefit. They needed original documents everywhere you applied for benefit e.g. tax credit, child benefit and the job centre. There's so much stress because we are afraid the original documents might get lost (14).

My friends did everything for me. And I cannot say exactly how long it took but I know I have spent more than 45 minutes in each interview in filling in questionnaire forms for benefit (5).

Income support didn't take a long time – only a week. But child benefit and child tax credit was three months. The difficulty was they needed original documents, so I went to Inland Revenue to photocopy the original (20).

Income support after one and half months ... Child benefit and child tax credit took almost five months (49).

Other issues

While the main issues raised were housing and welfare benefits, one person mentioned education, in the context of their children being forced to change schools. Another four people felt that the experience of getting advice following status had been difficult but felt unable to specify any one particular problem.

Many refugees felt that they were still being denied choice, even though their status had now changed and many simply wanted to get on with their lives in their own way.

My personal problem is that I want to start a positive life, but I feel still I am controlled. I have been controlled for seven years. I feel it's enough now (20).

Not all refugees had experienced difficulties and ten of those interviewed had managed to cope with the transition from asylum seeker to refugee. But in each case, this was because of the contacts and support which they had had. Those who had worked as volunteers in refugee support agencies had a clear advantage.

Before getting status, I was working part-time as a volunteer adviser at the Citizens Advice Bureau in Maryhill, and so I have a knowledge of the

system and how to fill in some forms and other things, so it wasn't so difficult for me (66).

No I didn't normally experience any difficulties after receiving status, because while working with Money Matters, friends in there have just taken all the forms and filled [them] in and helped me to apply for a house. It was just luck or a chance (50).

Because I was already doing my voluntary job with Karibu, and later the Citizens Advice Bureau in Parkhead, I didn't experience so much difficulty (69).

Staying in Glasgow

Almost four fifths of the refugees interviewed intended to stay in Glasgow. Only three stated that they intended to leave while four were uncertain as to their long-term plans. Six interviewees had already left the city. Typical responses were:

Yes. This is my home and I am going nowhere else (17).

Yes, I intend to stay here in Glasgow because I am well settled here (66).

The main reason for deciding to stay in the city related to the roots which families had put down. Although refugees had had to wait a long time to receive status, a side effect of this was the fact that, having been in Glasgow for several years, they now felt reasonably settled, with children attending school and with many new friends.

Glasgow now is my home town and I wish to be buried here when the time comes. I have been well received when I have arrived here first, and people were very welcome and helpful. I have lots of friends – Scottish more than African people (5).

It's good here. The people are more friendly than down south (13).

Glasgow is our new home and we are living here for more than five years now. Here we have made new friends and [are] well integrated. The education for our children is good compared to other cities where some of our people live (32).

As asylum seekers had arrived in Glasgow from a range of countries with which the city had not previously had any links, new communities had formed. Examples included refugees from Somalia, the Congo and the Ivory Coast:

I just like to be here and there is an Ivorian community in town. I have many friends and family here as well (11).

But some refugees intended to move away from Glasgow, having had more mixed experiences, including racist assaults.

Scotland is a lovely place and the country has a big development plan ahead and there are more and more opportunities coming for the country for employment. But the politicians lacked improving the relationship between the refugees and local [people]. I have been assaulted three times since the 9/11 event and spent two days at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary and the case was reported to the police. And I lived with noisy neighbours as well and I would not stay in this condition here. I am looking to move from Glasgow (68).

The six families who had already left Glasgow were now living in Edinburgh (two families), Renfrew, London (two) and Portsmouth. Other places mentioned as potential destinations if families moved in the future were Birmingham, Northampton and Manchester.

Better housing and job opportunities were seen as key to persuading potential movers to stay in Glasgow. Refugees continually stressed their desire for self-reliance, self-respect and independence and believed that these would only come with paid employment.

Interviewees were asked to identify three positive aspects of living in Glasgow. Results were as follows:

Aspect of Life	Nos. of responses
Friendliness of local people	34
Education	34
Sense of community; the city as 'home'	18
Health and welfare services	9
Employment opportunities	5
Good public transport	4
Good shopping	3
Weather; agreeable climate	2
Other	2

As is clear from Table 5.2, there were three issues where Glasgow 'scored' highly and two of these are related. The city was thought to be a friendly and welcoming place and to have a strong sense of community. Refugees appeared to feel increasingly 'at home'. Education was highly valued, partly for its own sake, partly because it enabled both children and adults to learn English and to develop and update skills, and partly because children made lasting friendships within the schools which were an aid to long-term integration. The value placed on education has been reflected in previous studies of asylum seekers in Glasgow (Barclay *et al* 2003).

Typical responses were:

Here in Glasgow compared to London and where I was before, I can say that the cost of life here is cheaper than there, and the town is expanding and still in development process with lots of opportunities for

investments. And also the town will host the Commonwealth Games in 2014 so there are lots coming here in this town. The education as well is one of the great criteria for me to stay here for my kid (50).

I like the people who have been so helpful and supportive to me and my family. I like the city and all the surrounding facilities in shopping here, and Glasgow is an emergent city in Europe. The education here is, compared to other cities in UK, one of the best and there are lots of opportunities for my children and even my wife to perform at school (66).

But there were still some concerns that, despite the friendliness, there might be underlying tensions:

I like to be here and love the people. The country is open and we can do business with anyone. But the way people are still looking at Muslims is not fair and things need to change for that (67).

Interviewees were also asked to identify the various negative aspects of life in Glasgow.

Table 5.3 Negative Aspects of Living in Glasgow	
Aspect of Life	Nos. of responses
Presence of drink and drug users and related anti-social behaviour	21
Racism and hostile attitudes	21
Scottish weather	16
Quality of housing	15
Poor public transport	4
Poor employment opportunities	4
Glasgow accents	3
Dirty environment	2
Poor access to education	1
Poor health services	1
Nothing negative to report	9

As might have perhaps been anticipated, a substantial number of people raised the issue of racism and hostility towards refugees. Many people did not refer to these in any detail at this point and we deal with this issue later in the report. But it was clearly a matter of major concern.

The Government needs to work very hard to change the way people are still looking to Arabs and Muslim community in Glasgow. We are still facing the danger and the life threatening [behaviour] with locals. Some want to end our lives with killing some of us and I don't even know why they react like that. Things must change and need to be done now (67).

Some of the threatening behaviour which was encountered by refugees was not race-related but was drink- or drug-related and refugees found the culture of drinking and drug-taking on many housing estates both alien to them and hard to deal with.

I hate the booze and the youngsters' booze culture (5).

Binge drinking, drugs and violence (13).

The drug addict culture and binge drinking (66).

I am too scared about the situation of the secondary school with the bad behaviour of schoolchildren and the drugs and gangs culture, bullies and other bad things (70).

The weather may have been viewed as a negative aspect of living in Glasgow but is not something that can be changed. Housing issues are dealt with elsewhere in this report.

Experience of Services

Information on services

We asked refugees about the various organisations which they had contacted in order to obtain information on public services and the results are shown in Table 5.4.

Organisation	No. of refugees making contact
Scottish Refugee Council	28
Positive Action in Housing	14
Job Centre Plus	13
Glasgow Asylum Seeker Support Team	7
Citizens Advice Bureau	5
Social Work Department	5
Money Advice Centre	2
Other voluntary organisations	5

The most important organisation, by far, was the Scottish Refugee Council, including the SUNRISE project located within it. Most refugees spoke well of the Council and believed they had received appropriate assistance, but this was not always the case. A small number of interviewees was critical of the Refugee Council, although this may be a result of not receiving the information which they felt they needed. Among the range of comments were:

The Refugee Council advised me on what to do and where to go for any assistance (37).

Scottish Refugee Council was very helpful. I got enough information from them (33).

I didn't get the same information and even advice from the Refugee Council. There at the Refugee Council I have spent time waiting without any result and I have to come back several times (32).

Positive Action in Housing (PAiH) was particularly important for advice in relation to the housing service and Job Centre Plus for employment.

After receiving the status I went to Positive [Action in] Housing ... to seek for advice and look for a house. Positive Housing helps me understand the policy and the rules in the housing, while seeking for a house as a refugee (32).

Just PAiH, because they used to come to my area on outreach services (57).

After receiving my status, I went to the Jobcentre Plus and spoke to someone at the Glasgow Refugees Team. I went there two or three times and they sorted out some of my concerns (68).

Other voluntary organisations named by refugees included Karibu Women's Group, Portal (in Govan), the Red Road Women's Centre and the Kingsway Health and Wellbeing Centre in Scotstoun. These bodies clearly served an important function within local communities.

The service about which refugees sought most information was housing (34 responses), followed by welfare benefits (20), employment (11) and education (10). As well as the organisations listed in Table 5.4, refugees also obtained information by word of mouth from friends and other refugees. Only three interviewees believed that the information had not been useful, although a further six were unsure and believed that it had been insufficient.

One of the main difficulties had been the fact that in only three cases had the information been provided in the refugee's own language. To some extent, this may reflect the problems which some agencies have in providing written material and interpreters in a wide range of languages and dialects. But the provision of such a large amount of information only in English may reduce its effectiveness, if refugees do not clearly understand it. Some refugees had been helped by their attendance at language classes, although some still struggled with the more technical terms on official forms.

As I was attending English class I could understand a bit and write in the application form and even answer some of the questions (32).

Yes. The information was in English and I have experienced some difficulties understanding some terms used in some application forms (69).

Yes. All the information received was in English and some were repeated to me in a kind of slow motion to help me understand (68).

Housing

Refugees were now living in a wide range of accommodation. Table 5.5 shows the tenure breakdown of refugee housing, and suggests that refugees are beginning to take more control of their housing situation. Although the majority were living in GHA property, some had moved to other housing associations and local authorities, some to the private rented sector, and one refugee family had become owner-occupiers. The other housing associations to which refugees had moved were Elderpark, North Glasgow, Sanctuary and Williamsburgh.

Tenure	No. of households
Glasgow HA	39
Other HA	4
Local authority (outwith Glasgow)	3
Private landlord	3
Owner occupier	1

In terms of house size, 24 households were living in a three-apartment (two-bedroom) house, 14 in a four-apartment (three bedroom) house, and 10 in a two-apartment (one bedroom) house. One person was living in a single apartment which appeared to be a studio flat, and one family had a five apartment (four bedroom) house.

Only 17 people were happy with their accommodation. 27 were unhappy and a further six uncertain. Seven people complained about issues of dampness and disrepair, and related health issues.

We tried to paint the house [but] after a week, the dampness is back. Just the other day I noticed on my son's bed there was water, so I had to let him sleep in my bed, and I slept in the sitting room (45).

I have a damp kitchen, and it's next to the children's room and all the food gets spoilt because of the damp (57).

It's not healthy for children. All walls are in mould. I can't heat it properly – electricity bills are really high. It's very cold because of dampness (64).

I have a problem with the neighbour's night noise or nuisance. Because the up floor neighbour has a problem with his water pipe and in the middle of the night we have a leak of water coming to the ceiling and there is a big noise as well. The house is not in good repair for the moment and I have been told that they will deal with that soon. I am still waiting for them to arrange that (50).

At the moment I am facing a huge problem with the heating in the house and I don't really want to stay in this house in this condition (69).

Many of the properties in which refugees had been housed as asylum seekers by NASS (now UKBA) were in high rise blocks and these had proved particularly unpopular. This form of housing was not one with which many refugees were familiar, the properties were not thought to be in good condition and there were few opportunities for children to play.

No really, it is too small for us, and it is on the second floor. My children are playing and my neighbour down stair annoyed and they are complaining. And my health is not helpful to stay on second floor (28).

Sometimes disputes about children's play and about noise could escalate and some refugees expressed a concern about anti-social behaviour, which could be racist in nature.

Unfriendly neighbours. At one point I had sectarian graffiti scribbled on my walls (13).

I live on the 14th floor. Sometimes, children throw eggs at you or bottles. It happen so many times. It was not easy (57).

Apart from concerns about the poor condition of the houses, the other main complaint was their size. 15 interviewees raised this issue in interview, believing that they required at least one additional bedroom for their family.

I could not get a three bedroom house. We are five people staying in two bedroom house temporarily and I do not think I'll get it. It is almost five years I have house problem (28).

I am still waiting for the reply of the application for housing I have made. For the moment, the size of my house is too small to accommodate the entire family. I am looking for a three bedroom house (66).

I have a five year old boy, with whom I share the same bedroom (27).

It is too small and too old. I share the same room with my daughter and there is no storage. It's really bad for us (38).

My son and my daughter have to share one bedroom and my wife and I the other one. We are looking for a three bedroom house at the moment (32).

We attempted to make a comparison between the size of the houses in which our refugee interviewees were currently living and the size of houses which they appeared to require. We used as our guide the allocation policy of the GHA which considers the award of points for overcrowding and states that applicants require:

- a living room
- a bedroom for the applicant and partner
- a bedroom for each two children of the same sex under 16
- a bedroom for each two children under 10

- a bedroom for partners living in the household (excluding the applicant) of 16 or over
- a bedroom for any remaining member of the household

Interviewees were asked about the size and structure of their household and about the size of the property they occupied. The average household size of the refugee households was 3.5 people, compared with just under 2.2 for Scotland as a whole. Family structure was as shown in Table 5.6.

We sought to compare the size of house which individual families required with the size of house they were currently occupying. In some cases, the precise ages of the children were not known and so we have had to estimate ages from other information provided by the interviewee. This means that we are not able to make a precise calculation using the GHA requirements listed above. But we estimate that, in 14 cases, households required an extra bedroom and so were living in overcrowded conditions. This confirms the views of the interviews themselves that they needed larger accommodation.

Table 5.6: Household structure of interviewees	
Household structure	No. of responses
Single male	4
Female plus 1 child	12
Female plus 2 children	6
Female plus 3 children	3
Couple	1
Couple plus 2 children	13
Couple plus 3 children	6
Couple plus 4 children	2
Couple plus 5 children	1
Couple plus 7 children	1
No response	1

Because there was dissatisfaction about the quality and size of the housing which many refugees occupied, this appeared to colour their view of the housing service overall. Only 18 people believed that housing staff were helpful, although nine others were unsure. When asked if they had been treated fairly, 19 thought they had, 16 thought not and 12 were unsure; a further three gave no response. Those refugees who had accepted a new tenancy were generally satisfied, while those who had found that they were unable to get a house in an area of their choice were not. This reinforces the point made earlier that refugees had received insufficient advice and information about how to negotiate the housing system.

The _____ Housing Association, They are very helpful. When I moved the next day, they send technician to my house to explain [to] me how things work and how to manage to control everything (5).

No, I do not find them helpful. I was applying for Anniesland housing, but they told me if you wait for 20 years, you do not get a house in Anniesland. I am over 60. Do you think for how many years I live? (4)

_____ Housing Association. No they were not helpful, because I don't have any points. They have put me on waiting list. They think I have three bedrooms, it's more than enough. They don't know what problems I am facing every day going up the stairs, specially we don't have lifts (12).

In this last case, the interviewee clearly believed that the association had viewed her application solely in terms of size, whereas she thought that the problems she was having with walking upstairs ought to have been taken into account.

The lack of good quality housing information resurfaced at focus groups. Refugees had been faced with a large number of different housing association landlords in Glasgow and were unclear about how to negotiate the different application processes and understand the different allocation policies. Many refugees were familiar with the local areas in which they were living but were less familiar with other parts of the city and so had little idea as to whether the choices they were making were realistic ones and the likelihood of their being offered a property. Some complained of being 'steered' towards selecting particular areas and types of property.

Within the private sector, there were no major problems reported to us regarding the service refugees had received and one interviewee spoke well of her landlord.

I am happy with those dealing with the housing and if there is anything that needs to be done or repaired in the house, we just need to phone and make an appointment and the repair will be done. It's a private landlord and I cannot remember the name (70).

Finally, there was a recognition that some staff operating frontline services tried to be as helpful as possible, but they were sometimes constrained by organisational policies or decisions taken at a higher level.

The lower rank were helpful, but the higher ones were not (58).

Social Work

There was an even split between those refugees who had contacted the social work service (24 people) and those who had not (25). One person appeared unclear about the service and did not respond.

Most people who contacted social workers did so because of delays in receiving benefits and resulting financial hardship. In a few cases, social workers had helped in other ways, by providing general information and advice and checking on a family after a move to a new home. Those who did not use the social work service were sometimes unclear as to the range of support which might be available to them, while a few used voluntary agencies instead.

The contact was about the benefit for my children [which] was taking too long; we didn't have any money for food. We had to go to see them for help (20).

When my benefit took long time to start, I went to see them for help (57).

No. But working with Karibu, I was in contact with some social work services which work with asylum seekers – women members of Karibu (5).

Of the 24 people who contacted social workers, 19 stated that they had received the help they needed and also believed that they had been treated fairly.

Yes. There I was treated fairly and even with a human spirit and a perfume of love in the eyes of the lady who serves me that time (32).

Yes, they helped me to follow it up, by telephoning the benefit people checking why it's taking so long. At that time, I didn't have even credit on my telephone (20).

Health services

Access to health services appeared to present no significant difficulties. In all, 37 people had contacted the health service since receiving status, most of these contacts being routine appointments with their GP. Those who had not been in contact with their GP made the point that, as they were in good health, they had no need of medical services at the present time.

There is research with refugees which explores the importance of mental health services. Summerfield (1999), for example, refers to the frequency with which refugees attend surgeries with non-specific ailments, often related to the stress and trauma of their circumstances. More recently, Sim and Gow (2008) identified a growing concern amongst health professionals in Lanarkshire at the emergence of trauma-related mental health issues among refugees. In neither study, however, did refugees themselves discuss mental health problems and they were never referred to by interviewees in this present study.

As the majority of refugees were still living in the same house, or the same area, in which they had lived before getting status, they had had no need to change their GP or dentist. They sometimes recalled the difficulties they had experienced on their first arrival in Glasgow but now they appeared satisfied with the medical practice with which they were registered and the service they received.

In the beginning in 2003, asylum seekers could only be registered with certain GPs. They were very busy. It was difficult to register (65).

I am still using the service of the previous GP and dentist I have with my family members before and even after receiving status (32).

I was even welcomed by the GP and he is the one who send me a welcome package letter and explain me what are the services they have and what can I expect from them (5).

All 37 people who had contacted the health service stated that they had received the advice or the treatment which they needed and believed they had been treated fairly. In only one case did there appear to be unhappiness regarding a GP consultation but the interviewee conceded that the doctor had been unable to treat her illness.

When I called they were very friendly and asked if I needed interpreter (14).

They did not diagnose my illness in time ... It's not really their fault. There is no cure for it anyway (29).

There appeared to be a general satisfaction with health services with around three quarters of our interviewees viewing them positively.

Police and legal services

Only 15 refugees had been in contact with the police since receiving status and this had usually been in connection with hostility or racist behaviour, or more general anti-social behaviour linked to drugs or alcohol.

I had to contact them because my back door was easy to access and some drug people stay on stairs, so I was worried about my children. That is why I contacted police (61).

I have been in contact with the police before receiving status and even after. I remember that when I was living alone before receiving status, one of my neighbours was very nasty to me and saying nasty things to me so I went to see the police and have been advised by them and the woman was cautioned and even ordered to stop harassing me. It was a kind of anti-social behaviour (70).

There were some references by interviewees to the importance of community relations between the police and the refugee communities. Two individuals had worked closely with the police as an interpreter and as a community liaison person with Congolese refugees. One individual felt the police should be more proactive in visiting refugees as part of their community relations remit.

I worked as interpreter with the police before getting status. And sometimes they requested my service for translation (66).

As a member of the Congolese community church, I am the one in charge on relations with the police. So I am in contact with the police and they came time to time to teach us some rules and how to react with any acts from youngsters outside and in the road (32).

I am thinking to go and see them because I think that the police should be visiting black families living alone in a white man's land in order to know if there is any problem with them and they have to protect those vulnerable families (5).

Of the 15 individuals who had contacted the police, 12 believed that they had got the help they needed and had been treated fairly.

A significant number of refugees (31 in all) had been in contact with lawyers since receiving status. In most cases, the contact had related to the granting of status and many interviewees referred to their cases as now having been officially 'closed'. But some refugees were now pursuing cases involving family reunion and remained in touch with their lawyers.

I went regarding receiving my status. Then he sent me a letter of closing my file (a farewell letter). I haven't contacted him again (12).

I have been in contact with the lawyer after receiving the status. He helps me filling some form for the family reunion under the immigration to bring my children here (70).

One individual recognised that, as a refugee with Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK, he would now be charged by their lawyer for his services. He welcomed this as a kind of confirmation that he was now on the same footing as a UK national.

When I received the status, he gave me a phone call and since then nothing between us. But I hope to get back to him for another issue and now as a refugee and not as asylum seeker and hope that I will be charged for that service now (32).

All 31 people who had contacted a lawyer stated that they had received the help and advice which they required and had been treated fairly. A number were very complimentary about the service which they had received.

I think that he played a role in that, to me getting status (50).

They have been very good to me, legally, socially, emotionally and psychologically (17).

She still keeps in touch with me by telephoning and emailing me to check everything is OK with us (20).

Education

The majority of interviewees made use of education services. 26 people attended college, three attended university and four did not specify where they went. A further eight households had made use of college courses in the past. English language courses were mentioned by nine people, while other courses

attended by refugees included social care and social work, social sciences, construction, tourism, business, marketing, accounting and computing courses such as the ECDL⁷.

42 of the 50 households had children who attended educational courses – mostly schools but also including colleges, universities and nurseries. Only four interviewees had experienced any difficulties in accessing education and these related to finding the right college course and finding childcare.

The majority were happy with the schools which their children attended. Refugees praised the quality of the teaching, the values and ethos of the schools, and also the diversity of school communities, which was seen as a strength. Several people spoke of attending parents' evenings and other events and of wanting to become more involved with the schools. If children themselves appeared happy and settled and were making friends, then parents were satisfied.

The important thing is the children are happy in the school. If they are happy, I am happy too (12).

They are very involving for parents and they intend to involve us more (13).

As a Christian father born and raised in a Christian family and my children are attending a Christian college, I am very happy for the quality of the education. I am a member of the school parent community and we meet time to time to discuss the integration of our children in school with others (32).

With a Christian background I [am] happy with the education my children are receiving from that school and I can just say that I feel the equality there (50).

I am very happy with the school that my children are attending and I am very happy with the system putting in place there to help children perform and learn well. I am involved with the parent school community where we meet to discuss the evolution of children at school with teachers and director of school (66).

I am very happy with the education system there and the diversity of school. I am involved with the parent association in school and also attended the parent meeting at school when needed (69).

These findings accord with previous work, for example by Smyth (2006) and Reakes (2007) on the presence of asylum seeker and refugee children in schools. They suggest that the impact is a positive one with schools becoming more innovative and creative in delivering teaching. Extra-curricular activities were also important in aiding integration.

⁷ The European Computer Driving Licence

Only three concerns were raised in relation to the schools. Two people believed that there was a degree of unruly behaviour in schools and questioned whether discipline was adequate. One person believed that the quality of the school building was poor. And one person was unhappy because her children went to a non-denominational school; she thought that a Roman Catholic school would have a better educational ethos.

Language and Learning English

Exactly half of those interviewed (25 people) claimed that they still experienced some difficulties with the English language. Most had attended language courses and believed that their language skills had improved significantly but the Glasgow accent was still proving difficult for some refugees to understand. Some others found it straightforward to converse in 'everyday' English but struggled with the more 'official' style of English in some of the forms which they were required to complete.

At the beginning when we arrived in Glasgow, the Glaswegian accent was difficult to understand (14).

Even now, I always have problem with the Scottish accent (29).

I have experienced difficulty in English issues yesterday, but now I don't have any more problems with the language. Even I have to learn Glaswegian (67).

Though my English language is not bad, when I talk to an official person I need a formal language which I find difficult (22).

37 of the interviewees had been offered an interpreter at some point, although a number of people stressed that they were not always needed. There were some concerns about the quality of the service which some interpreters were offering.

I felt they don't interpret what I am telling them. Once when I was in the doctors, the interpreter was not telling the doctor what I was complaining so I decided to do it myself – talk direct to the doctor myself. At first the doctor didn't understand me, but with actions and little of my English we understand each other now (12).

I refused because he was not competent enough (13).

And one person pointed out that a reliance on interpreters would not help refugees to acquire English language skills in the longer term.

Yes, but if we always use interpreters, how are we going to improve our English? (45)

A total of 19 interviewees were still attending language classes, although childcare was a problem in a small number of cases. The high demand for ESOL courses had resulted in some refugees having to wait several months

before being enrolled on a course but refugees appeared prepared to wait, as they believed it was very important to become competent in English.

I think as foreigners, we shouldn't stop learning English. We should learn more and more to speak the proper language (34).

I think it's important for those who cannot speak the language to go to school and to learn (68).

My children are going to school and college ... Even at home they have the opportunity to speak with my husband in English for their own improvement (70).

Finally, refugees were asked if, in general, they considered their use of English was good. 31 people said that it was, seven that it was not, and the remainder felt that it was getting better but that there was still room for further improvement. Once again, some people referred to the Glasgow accent as being hard to understand and conversations which took place over the telephone rather than face-to-face also presented some difficulties.

Where refugees had come from a country where English was one of the official languages, then their language competence was generally good. Those refugees who were in employment had the opportunity to use English on a daily basis and this helped them to improve.

I've improved my English but I still need time to learn (2).

I can say that my use of English is getting better and better because, as a bus driver, I use that on regular basis (11).

Yes of course, as I am working as social worker, I use that every day (70).

One refugee drew attention to the fact that their interview was being conducted in English as a sign that their competence in the language was good.

Living in the Community

We sought to explore how refugees felt about the communities in which they lived, if they had made friends or become involved with community activities, and – importantly – if they had experienced any significant hostility or racism within their local area. We recognise that the term 'community' is a contested one and that we did not define precisely the nature of the community to which we were referring. In fact, refugees frequently distinguished in their responses to our questions between communities of refugees, with a shared cultural and national heritage, and geographical communities or localities within Glasgow.

Living in the area

When asked if they felt happy living in their area, 28 refugees stated that they did. Feelings of satisfaction with the area were often linked to the fact that the family had lived there for some time and felt settled, and that children attended local schools where they had made friends. Many of the areas in which refugees lived were relatively close to shops and transport facilities and these were also valued.

After spending more than six years in the same area and place, I can say that I am happy living where I am in the moment and my children enjoy living here because they have friends here (66).

I am near to the shops, and school of my son. I have lived in this area for long time, I know the area well and made a lot of friends in this area (45).

[This] is very good area and everything I need is quite near to my house, like markets, train station, subway, town centre. I really like it (61).

In many areas, local people were seen as friendly and, where there were other refugee families living nearby – particularly from the same national community – then this helped interviewees to feel positively about their area. Where refugees felt slightly isolated, they were sometimes more wary.

Even though we are new here, the community are very friendly here (14).

Where I live with my family, there are lot of members of the Congolese community, and I can say that I am happy living in that area at the moment now (32).

Yes for the moment. Because, as the only black family surrounded by white families, I cannot say that I [am] living in a happy area. But I don't have any problem with the neighbours at the moment (5).

Another 17 interviewees were unhappy with their area, while five were either unsure or thought the area was 'so-so'. The majority of complaints about the area related to noise and anti-social behaviour. This led to refugee families feeling unsafe, for example when returning home after dark.

I have so much problems with neighbours and it's very dirty area. On Saturday nights we don't sleep all night because of noise (12).

Very troublesome people with drug and violent culture (36).

I experienced anti-social behaviour. My car has been destroyed three times (49).

We explored the issue of safety further. 24 refugees stated that they felt safe in their area, with 17 feeling unsafe and 9 unsure. Responses were very varied. Thus some parents felt very confident about letting their children play outside whereas others were more fearful. And several interviewees made the point that

they were aware of complaints which had sometimes been made about their area but that they personally had not experienced any problems.

That said, in a small number of cases, incidents of racism and of violence were referred to by refugees.

At least my children can go to the shops. I feel very safe environment. They play with bicycles outside [and I] am not worried if they play outside alone (14).

I don't feel safe for my children playing outside by themselves unless I am there with them (20).

I am not sure, because many people complain about the area, but nothing has happened to me (45).

Nobody talk about this area in a good way. But it is OK for me (59).

Honestly I can not say that I feel safe there, because I have experienced racism acts once. Some youngsters passing by have insulted one of my friends when I was going with him at the bus stop. I can just say that it was an isolated act from those irresponsible young people (32).

No, my friend's son was knifed before, in his arm (12).

Racism and harassment

The issue of racism and hostility was pursued further. There was an even split between those who felt threatened living where they did (23 people) and those who did not (24). A further three were unsure. Those who felt threatened were able to identify particular incidents which had occurred, including arson, and this is clearly a matter of concern. Others spoke of the 'gang culture' and of anti-social behaviour which made them feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

They fired my letter box in August 2000 (4).

In 2002 and 2003, some people used to drop burning cigarette through my letter hole on my carpet. I was worried and reported it to the housing association (17).

Sometimes I have to struggle with some drunkards and even drunk thugs who think that they can assault you when they like or want. Some have even sent a letter to me saying that they are going to burn me like what the other Muslims did to other people when they bomb the Glasgow International Airport (67).

I am just too scared of what some people think about Muslims since the Glasgow airport bomb attack and I do not even feel safe while working in town sometimes (68).

The youth keeps knives and dangerous small weapons waiting to attack. The use of bad language is a worry to me because of my child (39).

Of the 24 people who did not feel threatened, hardly anybody expanded on their answer, although one person suggested that things were changing for the better.

No, but in the past five years I can say that some local youths were trying to threaten some of asylum seekers in this area. But since then, things have changed in a positive way (66).

Although less than half our interviewees felt threatened in their local area, a larger number (29) had actually experienced racism. In the main, the racism described was verbal abuse and much of it was perpetrated by young people. While the insults were obviously upsetting, most interviewees stated that they were not necessarily threatening and were often isolated acts. Some people suggested that the use of insults reflected ignorance about refugees and asylum seekers and one person was working with Oxfam to raise awareness among local people about refugees and to help explain why they had moved to Scotland.

I have been called 'black monkey' a few times (39).

Not me but my son has been threatened by some gang's member when returning home after his football training. But, as I have said, it can be taken as an isolated act (32).

I had and still have some racism problems – but only with teenagers. Sometimes when I go to my back garden, they start saying 'Paki', 'Spicy', but I'm always ignoring them (34).

In Glasgow I would say yes. I was attacked in buses, taxis, my children always complaining about being attacked. I was doing raising awareness in Glasgow with Oxfam, educating people why we had to flee our country – I got a lot of experience. Instead of fighting back, try to solve the problem, explaining why we are here (14).

Sometimes, the racism was perceived as taking place within organisations and reference was made by one refugee to housing staff, but it appeared to be difficult to pin down and refugees believed that it was the attitude of staff that was racist, rather than any specific comment or act.

19 refugees stated they had experienced no racism, while two were unsure.

Involvement with the community

Thirty refugees stated that they had become involved with various community groups in Glasgow. There are numerous groups within the city, reflecting a history of community activism, and so, despite some negative reaction to

asylum seekers initially, there has also been a significant reservoir of community support for them (Wren 2004).

Karibu, which works with African women to facilitate their integration into the UK and to access services, was mentioned by six people, while four people mentioned the Kingsway Court Health and Wellbeing Centre in Scotstoun, and three the Framework for Dialogue Groups, run by the Scottish Refugee Council and the City Council. Some refugees referred to groups within their own national communities, such as the Iraqi Scottish Association, Congolese and Sudanese groups, some to area-based community groups and networks in Govan, Toryglen, North Glasgow, Pollokshaws and Knightswood, and some refugees were involved with national organisations such as Oxfam.

I am the Chairperson of the Lincoln Refugee Group in the community. I have applied for a fund and received a sum of more than £1,000 for our community in the area and we are trying to organise a friendship community, where locals and refugees share some views and experiences in a daily life (66).

I am involved with the Karibu, an organisation which brings refugee women from any African country together and other women from other countries as well, and there I was working as the general secretary. I have applied to work with Save the Children as well, as one of the staff members (69).

I went through the website, and found out about community development team. I contacted them, they took me to a women's group. I met them and was introduced to a lady I will be working with. We will be doing some work with the prisoners – that will help me to get the skills and afterwards help me to get a job (14).

A further 20 refugees stated that they had so far not become involved.

There was a similar split between those who had become involved with a faith group or place of worship (30) and those who had not (20). Those who attended went to a wide range of places of worship, mainly Christian and Muslim, although some refugees found it difficult to attend worship if there was no Mosque near to their home. Local churches have been particularly important in offering support to asylum seekers over the years (Barclay *et al* 2003) and some refugees had become involved with them, for example St Rollox Church of Scotland, which is close to Sighthill.

When asked if, perhaps as a result of attending church or local organisations and groups, refugees now felt 'part of the community', only nine people said they did not. This relatively small number sometimes felt excluded because of their ethnic background or because they had not been made to feel welcome.

I feel I am not part of the community. I am always outcasted or pushed aside because of my colour. We should be treated equal (20).

No, because I do not feel welcomed (38).

But the majority believed that they had become part of local communities, often because of their children attending school and the friendships which had developed between children and parents. Thus, as highlighted earlier, a number of people distinguished between their own 'ethnic' community, linked to other refugees, and the geographical community within their local area.

Yes, because I am in Glasgow over seven years. My two daughters were born in Scotland, my son grow up here (28).

I can say that I am part of the community where I live because I used to partake at some events around the flat in the Congolese community and with local people. I am part of the Cardonald community as well (32).

Yes, because I am used to the culture, accent and the people here are very helpful, I feel I am part of them (45).

Some refugees recognised that becoming part of the community often took time but they believed that they were working towards this.

I cannot say at the moment that I am part of the white community, but the black one – because we have an Ivorian community. But I will try to integrate [into] the white community in Elderspark in the near future (11).

I am trying to, so far yes, I want to ... Sensitive issues are affecting the community; I want to help in any way I can, then I will feel fully as part of the community (14).

Finally, we explored whether refugees felt that, even as they became more integrated within local communities within Glasgow, they nevertheless were able to retain their own sense of identity. All but six interviewees believed that they had retained their own identity, even after living for several years within Scotland and this was achieved by speaking in their own language at homes and by pursuing their own customs and forms of worship. Some spoke of their Scottish friends becoming interested in their culture and how they were all beginning to learn from each other.

I don't think I changed my identity. I am still who I am (12).

Yes because still we having same family life, and speaking the Kurdish language at home (28).

I have some Scottish friends who want to learn to speak my language so that we can even communicate together (50).

I have kept my identity and try to share that with some local [people] who have expressed their interest to learn my own culture (67).

A small number felt it was difficult to maintain a separate identity and believed that eventually they would have to adapt to Scottish lifestyles and culture. It was also thought to be challenging for children to maintain the identity of their family, when they were subjected to so many Scottish influences at school.

Not really, there isn't much happening to show your own identity and you have to adapt to their lifestyle (1).

For myself yes, but I am still trying hard with my children. It is not easy because I don't have a large Turkish community around me (61).

Having friends and support

Most refugees had made a number of friends in their local area, through community groups the church, or language classes. When asked, 41 refugees had made new friends and only nine stated that they had not.

Lots of friends from everywhere. I can communicate with people easily, even though I don't speak their language. Living in Glasgow made me learn other cultures and faiths and treat them equally (14).

I have lots of friends and most of them are Scottish people (66).

This is not a question – it's a reality. I have made new friends and lots of local [people] as well (67).

Finally, the friends and contacts which refugees had made were available for help and support if required and only one person stated that they did not have someone from whom they could get help. Most people spoke of their friends and family but there were also a large number of organisations mentioned, including the Scottish Refugee Council, Karibu, the Citizens Advice Bureau, local churches and other local groups. The position was summed up by one refugee who appeared surprised when asked if she had friends who would provide support. She replied:

I have lots and lots of friends here in Glasgow. This is my village now (5).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

The picture which has emerged from our research is of a population which is now relatively settled within Glasgow. Those people we interviewed had lived at their present address for over three years and had been in Scotland for almost five and a half. Children were attending local schools and families were increasingly involved in a range of community activities. Simply by being asylum seekers in Glasgow for such a long time, while waiting for the award of refugee status, had resulted in families beginning to put down roots.

Most families had only received status relatively recently and so the numbers who had been able to make permanent arrangements were relatively small. The period of 28 days in which refugees were expected to sort out their affairs was far too short for most people and arrangements for some welfare benefits took far longer to confirm. Nevertheless, most refugees now had appropriate benefits in place.

Housing was undoubtedly the main issue for refugee families. Many families were still living in their NASS / UKBA accommodation, which they believed to be inadequate both in terms of its size and its quality. Certainly, the descriptions of disrepair and dampness with which we were provided suggest that much of the housing is indeed in poor condition, and some (for example in Sighthill) has now actually been demolished. In terms of house size, although we were unable to obtain precise information on children's ages and bedroom needs, it seems clear that in a number of cases, families were indeed living in overcrowded conditions.

Some families had been able to obtain better housing, sometimes with smaller community-based housing associations, sometimes with private landlords and, in one case, through owner-occupation. Discussion at focus groups suggests that owner-occupation is a long-term ambition for many families, although it may not be a realistic option until refugee families are in reasonably well paid employment. Many refugees spoke of having owned – and indeed having built – their own home in their own countries and they were uncomfortable with the practice of renting. But the level of awareness of housing options was limited and this suggests that refugees need guidance in making informed housing choices.

Employment was also proving to be a problematic area for refugees. Only 14 of our interviewees were working and many people spoke of their frustration at being unable to find employment. Although the refugee workforce has a large number of skills, few people have proof of qualifications as these have been lost during the move to the UK. In addition, the long period of asylum, during which asylum seekers are forbidden to undertake paid work, is a deskilling experience and, although work shadowing schemes have helped some people into jobs, refugee unemployment levels remain high. This has also had an impact in preventing refugees from building up savings which they could use to buy a house or to invest for their future.

Other aspects of life in Glasgow were viewed more positively by refugees. There were relatively high levels of satisfaction with the education service and families were generally very happy with the schools their children attended. Adults were making use of college education services, particularly in relation to English language classes. Health services were well used and refugees appeared happy with their GPs, with most families staying with the same practice since their original arrival in Glasgow.

Where use had been made of social work services, the police or lawyers, refugees believed that they had received the service that they required and had been treated fairly.

One aim of the research was to explore why some families had left Glasgow and if there were actions which might be taken to persuade families to stay. Some people had encountered racism in Glasgow but this was not something that was peculiar to Glasgow and so not a significant factor in deciding to move. In fact, better housing and job opportunities were seen as key to persuading potential movers to stay in Glasgow. Refugees continually stressed their desire for self-reliance, self-respect and independence and believed that these would only come with paid employment. Some other locations, such as the south of England, were seen as possibly offering better opportunities, especially in employment.

One significant issue which is now looming for many refugees is that of family reunion and some families spoke of returning to lawyers to obtain advice on this. Where families had been separated or where there remained complications of status and citizenship, this was causing distress.

I have one problem. I have citizenship but I have two sons here. They do not have status (4).

I have not seen my children for the past five years but no-one is helping me to have them here with me in the UK (38).

Most families intended to stay in Glasgow and, although there had been some problems with racist incidents, around half of our interviewees felt safe in their local area. Three fifths of our interviewees had become involved with community groups and a similar number with faith groups or places of worship. There was a growing indication that refugees were making friends and building networks of support.

A number of refugees had started looking to the future. Some had started to think about the actions which might be taken to improve the future lives of refugees and to encourage integration. In part, this was seen as a process of educating Scots to have a greater awareness of why refugees were in the country in the first place.

I just want to say thanks, first for your time and even for the opportunity given me to speak about my situation and life. And I want the Refugee Council in Scotland to try to improve the lives of black people and

especially the asylum seekers and refugees. I want the Refugee Council to help black people integrate in the society and open [to] them opportunities for getting job and participate in the society, and also fight the racism in Glasgow (11).

There should be a programme at school to educate them why the asylum seekers are here. ... There should be more advertisements about racism even on TV – bring a programme about it every month so that it can stop. In Scotland, we are all the same, more education about this issue. We need to be given a chance, we are not bad people. They should not judge us by our colour (20).

Most refugees clearly saw their long-term future, and that of their children, as being in Scotland, and in Glasgow in particular.

I am very proud to be called Scottish and I love Scotland (17).

I hope I could do something to make life nice and easy in Glasgow because this city means lot to me. Glasgow is my second home country (34).

Such statements are hopeful signs that long-term integration of refugees into Glasgow society can be achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While there is some success to celebrate in the experience of refugees achieving status there is clearly room for improvement.

1. Right to Work

The Government must reinstate the right to work for all asylum seekers while they await a decision on their case.

This was withdrawn in a mistaken attempt to placate xenophobic fears of asylum seekers “stealing” jobs from indigenous workers. It has had no influence on the number of jobs available but has had a punishing effect on most asylum seekers and refugees.

The long period of enforced idleness has been isolating, demotivating and disabling and lies at the bottom of many of the difficulties faced by refugees once they receive status.

2. 28 days until support removed

The 28 day period to move from enforced dependency to independence is far too short. It is made worse by inefficient means of informing asylum seekers that they have been successful and it does not take account of the potentially disabling trauma such news can bring.

The period of time needs to be increased and consideration given to making the withdrawal of support transitional i.e. old forms of support should be withdrawn a little at a time and only as replacement forms come in.

3. Housing

The shortage of appropriate housing for refugees is part of the wider picture of the same housing shortage for other vulnerable groups in Glasgow.

There is no way around the need for Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government to begin quickly funding the building of more good quality, affordable social housing. This needs to include houses for larger families. Refugees will be helped as part of a general improvement for all. Such a building programme would also have an impact on unemployment.

The cap on the number of bedrooms that can be covered by housing benefit, as being suggested by the Government just now, is unacceptable.

More effective information and guidance on housing options and rights is also needed. See points 6 and 7.

4. Employment

28% of our sample of refugees was in some form of work (14 out of our 50 interviewees) which is a very high figure compared to other studies which show the real figure as nearer 8%. Presumably this is because our sample is skewed towards people who have some relationship with the community and who are more likely to be able to negotiate the system. However none of the 14 was working at a level which matched their actual skills.

These figures indicate a very low take up of skills brought by immigrants, which successive Scottish Governments have said they welcomed and in spite of the number of agencies attempting to facilitate this. The Scottish Government needs to address this issue, taking into account the needs of both refugees and employers in dealing with the barriers to refugee employment. The work of organisations like the Bridges Project in this field is to be commended and its good practice should be better funded and expanded.

The research for this project took place before the dramatic changes in the economy. Along with the rest of the population, it is likely that refugee employment is now lower than our research found. It is also likely that politicians will be even more sensitive than usual to raising the issue of refugee unemployment in a climate of increasing general unemployment.

The answer lies in taking action to increase general employment opportunities which will create employment for refugees also. A programme of social house building will create employment, not just in the building trades but in the spin off economy it will create. The approach of the Commonwealth Games should do the same at least temporarily. Other public works measures are within the powers of the Scottish Government to fund.

In the meantime the patient work of preparing refugees and employers by breaking down the barriers to refugee employment must continue and be expanded.

5. Language

The learning of English has been made more difficult for refugees because of the enforced idleness and isolation of the asylum seeker years. In spite of that, many have acquired basic communication skills of varying competence.

The higher levels of literacy skills needed to deal with officialdom and its forms and for many levels of employment, take longer to gain. This learning can be facilitated by involvement in work places, social intercourse and good quality ESOL courses. There are long waiting lists for these courses and there are also unemployed and under-employed graduates and teachers willing to do the job. ESOL provision needs to be expanded.

Further the sudden arrival of asylum seekers into refugee-hood suggests the need for specially tailored high intensity courses to suit their needs. Education authorities and further education colleges need to investigate this.

The good practice originally promoted by the Glasgow Asylum Seeker Support Project (GASSP), of the use of interpreters in education and health and of awareness of cultural and religious sensitivities, needs to be promoted in all local authority and national services and among employers and trade union organisations.

6. Information at the point of refugee status

Lack of information on options and rights in an intelligible and accessible form was a common complaint from our refugees.

We propose the compiling of an information pack in a range of languages, to be available in a hard copy and on the internet where it can be kept up-to-date. The pack should be supplied to all new refugees as they receive status and would be available on the internet in advance of this for those who want to be able to prepare.

Good formal information provision generates better informal dissemination through refugees' own networks of contacts and support. The group information sessions which have been provided by Scottish Refugee Council and Positive Action in Housing are a model of effective practice which could be replicated by other agencies and merits more funding.

7. Guidance

Under the New Asylum Model (NAM) caseworkers are responsible for informing their "clients" of the success or failure of their case. They are also responsible for informing successful refugees of the next steps they need to take.

Under the old asylum process, a successful refugee is no longer the responsibility of the Home Office and is left to fend for themselves. This deepening approach, leaving refugees to sink or swim, is a further disadvantage to people already burdened with problems of dislocation, years of enforced idleness, new language difficulties, racism and possible traumas of personal experience.

We propose the employment of Refugee Advocates who would be responsible for the caseload of new refugees, be able to offer advice and guidance to their personal clients, in their own homes as well as from an office, be sensitive to cultural and religious needs, be aware of language needs and be able to offer a helping hand in the direction of independence and self-reliance. Refugees who have successfully negotiated the process might make good candidates for such posts. This approach has been successfully piloted in Birmingham.

All this costs money but we should no longer tolerate politicians telling us there is none. There was a bottomless pit to finance the invasion of Iraq, a country which was no threat to us and unimaginable sums of money have appeared to bale out the banks. None of the proposals above would cost the tiniest fraction of those sums.

Summary of recommendations

1. Reinstate the right to work
2. Double the 28 day period when support is withdrawn and make it transitional
3. Build social housing for all – including refugees
4. Public works projects for all – including refugees
Expand “preparing for work” training programmes for refugees and employers
5. Expand ESOL teaching
6. Information pack and website for all new refugees
Group information sessions to be replicated and funded
7. Refugee Advocates to be employed

The money is there, the need is there; the political will needs to be put there.

Time for some campaigning.

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APPENDIX TWO: FORM FOR SAMPLE SELECTION

Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees



Research Project: The experiences and support needs of new refugees in Glasgow

The main focus of this research is the experiences and support needs of asylum seekers in Glasgow who have received permission to stay.

The research is being promoted by the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees and the results and recommendations of the work will be used to campaign for better support for refugees.

The research will be carried out by asylum seekers and refugees who will be looking into the needs of their own communities.

We need to select a sample of people to interview and we are hoping to interview a range of different people – men and women, of different ages, from different countries and living in different areas of Glasgow (and elsewhere).

If you are willing to be interviewed, it would help us to select our sample if you can answer the questions on the attached sheet. It may be that we are not able to interview you, but we will let you know if this is the case.

We need you to provide your contact details below but, once we have contacted you, these will be removed and the results of the interview itself will be stored anonymously. Only the interviewer will know who you are.

Contact details:

Name:

Address:

.....
Telephone(s):

Email:

Please can you return this form to your local community group or to a member of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees.

C/o Suite 301, 355 Byres Road, Glasgow G12 8QZ
Phone: 0141 946 6193 Fax: 0141 946 6111
Email: research@communityinfosource.org.uk

1. What gender are you? (Please circle)

MALE FEMALE TRANSGENDER / TRANSEXUAL

2. What is your age? (Write in)

3. Where were you born?

If possible, Can you tell us your country, tribe, city or town of origin?

.....

4. Which country are you a refugee from? (Write in)

.....

5. Do you have refugee status (or indefinite, exceptional, humanitarian, or discretionary leave to remain) / leave to stay here? (Please circle)

YES NO

If you have this when did you get it? (Write in)

6. If you have one, what is your religion? (Write in)

.....

7. Which languages do you speak well? (Write in)

.....

8. Which language would you prefer to be interviewed in? (Write in)

.....

9. What is your partnership or marital status? (Please circle)

1. Married or with partner
2. Single
3. Widowed
4. Divorced
5. Separated

10. How many people are there in your household? (Write in number)

.....

What is their relationship to you? (write in)

.....

APPENDIX THREE: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees Research Project:



The experiences and support needs of asylum seekers in Glasgow, who receive refugee status

Interviewer's name

Interview number.....

Introduction:

A. Introduce self

B. Describe project.

The main focus of this research is the experiences and support needs of asylum seekers in Glasgow who receive status. The research is being carried out by the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees and the results and recommendations of the work will be used to campaign for better refugee support.

C. The option to stop this interview:

You can choose to stop the interview at any point, or you can decide not to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with.

D. Anonymity and confidentiality:

Your response will be added together with those from other interviewees and used to write a report. It will not be possible to identify individuals from the information given in the report and only the two or three individuals involved in analysing the questionnaire will see individual answers. We guarantee that your identity in relation to the answers will be kept confidential.

Section 1: Personal details

[READ OUT: We already have some personal information from the one page questionnaire you completed previously. I would just like to ask one or two additional things].

1. You mentioned that you currently live in (name the area)

..... [NAME PLACE]. **How long have you lived there?** [WRITE IN]

2. How did you come to move here?

[PROBE: VOLUNTARILY OR THROUGH NASS DISPERSAL PROGRAMME?
– WRITE IN]

3. How long have you lived in Scotland? [WRITE IN]

4. [IF LIVED LONGER IN SCOTLAND THAN PRESENT LOCATION]
Where else did you live in Scotland? [WRITE IN]

5. How long have you lived in the UK? [WRITE IN]

6. [IF LIVED LONGER IN UK THAN IN SCOTLAND]
Where else did you live in the UK? [WRITE IN]

7. Are all your immediate family living in the Glasgow area?

1. Yes
2. No [ASK FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS]:

Are they in the UK? [WRITE IN]

Do you have regular contact with them? [WRITE IN]

8. Were you working before you came to the UK?

1. Yes. [IF YES] – What was your job? [WRITE IN]
2. No [IF NO] – What did you do? [e.g. unemployed, bringing up family, in education etc. [WRITE IN]:

9. [IF THEY HAVE A PARTNER]

Did your partner / spouse work?

1. Yes. [IF YES] – What was his / her job? [WRITE IN]
2. No [IF NO] – What did he / she do? [e.g. unemployed, bringing up family, in education etc. [WRITE IN]:

10. Are you working now?

1. Yes

[IF YES] – Where and what job(s) are you doing? [WRITE IN]

And can you tell me how you got the job? [WRITE IN]

2. No

[IF NO] – What has been your experience of looking for work? [WRITE]

Section 2. Getting refugee status

[READ OUT: I would now like to ask you some questions about getting status]

11. What kind of status do you have? [CIRCLE ONE]

1. Refugee status

2. Indefinite Leave to remain

3. Exceptional Leave to Remain

4. Humanitarian Protection

12. How long did it take to get status, from the time you first arrived in the UK? [WRITE IN]

How long is it since you got status? [CIRCLE ONE]

Under 3 months, 3 – 6 months, 6 months – 1 year, over 1 year

Much longer: [HOW LONG] Years

13. Did you experience any difficulties after receiving status?

[WRITE IN AND EXPLAIN WHAT THEY WERE – e.g. regarding housing, benefits, access to employment, health, personal difficulties]

14. Did you get support after receiving status? [WRITE IN AND EXPLAIN]

15. What did you think of the support that you received? Was it useful?

Was there anything else that you think you needed? [WRITE IN AND EXPLAIN]

16. Did you feel you got all the information which you needed? What do you think was missing? [WRITE IN]

17. Was the information you received in a language you speak well?

[WRITE IN]

YES / NO

1. If yes what language was that

18. Did you have to move house after getting status?

1. Yes [IF YES] Did you get help and information regarding your move? [WRITE IN]
2. No [IF NO] Would you like to move house? [WRITE IN]

19. What difficulties did you face (or still have) in relation to your housing? [WRITE IN]

20. Have you managed to sort out all the appropriate welfare benefits and how long did it take you?

[e.g. Income Support, Child Benefit, etc] What have been the main difficulties? [WRITE IN]

21. Now that you have status, do you plan to stay in Glasgow?

[FOR INTERVIEWEES NOT IN GLASGOW, ASK IF THEY INTEND STAYING WHERE THEY CURRENTLY ARE]

1. Yes
2. No

22. Can you tell us why you made that decision? [WRITE IN]

23. If not staying, where do you plan to move to? What attracts you about that place? [WRITE IN]

24. If not staying, are there things which would encourage you to stay? [WRITE IN]

FOR **GLASGOW RESIDENTS**, ASK QUESTIONS **25 – 28**.
FOR **NON-GLASGOW** RESIDENTS, GO TO QUESTION **29**.

25. If you moved to Glasgow after getting status, what were the reasons for your move? [WRITE IN] [ONLY FOR THOSE WHO MOVED TO GLASGOW AFTER GETTING STATUS]

26. Can you tell me three positive things about living in Glasgow? [WRITE]

27. And can you tell me three negative things about living in Glasgow? [WRITE IN]

28. And has your overall experience of living in Glasgow been positive or negative? [WRITE IN]

Section 3. Experience of services after getting status

[READ OUT: Now I would like to ask you about your experience of various services and organisations, such as health, social work, housing]

29. What organisations and groups did you have contact with immediately after you received status? Can you comment on the contact you've had?

[Organisations might include, for example, Positive Action in Housing, Scottish Refugee Council or the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees]

[WRITE IN COMMENT. PROMPT FOR INFORMATION ON HOW OFTEN THEY WENT TO ORGANISATION, HOW HELPFUL WAS ADVICE etc.]

30. What types of services have you received information about?

[WRITE IN E.G HOUSING, EDUCATION]

31. What information have you received about services and where has this come from? [WRITE IN]

32. And was it helpful? [WRITE IN]

Was it in your own language or in English?

Section 3a Housing

READ OUT: Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about the house you live in]

33. How many people live with you?

[WRITE IN AND DESCRIBE WHO IS IN THE HOUSEHOLD]

34. What kind of accommodation is it? For example:

1. A Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) property
2. Owned by a private landlord
3. Family member or friend's home
4. Owned by you
5. A local authority property
6. Other [WRITE IN]:

35. How many rooms do you have? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

How many bedrooms?

36. Are you happy with the accommodation?

[PROMPT FOR INFORMATION ON WHETHER IT IS THE RIGHT SIZE, IN GOOD REPAIR, IF THEY HAVE GARDEN ETC : [WRITE IN]

37. Did you find the people you dealt with in housing helpful (who were they)? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

38. Did you think that you were treated fairly? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

Section 3b Social Work

39. Have you had contact with social work services since getting status? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

40. If so, can you tell me what this contact was about? [WRITE IN]

41. Did you get the help that you needed? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

42. Did you think that you were treated fairly? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

Section 3c Health

43. Have you had contact with health services (doctor / GP, hospital etc) since getting status? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

44. Have you had any difficulty registering with a doctor, dentist or optician? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

45. Did you get the treatment, advice or information that you needed? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

46. Did you think that you were treated fairly? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

Section 3d Police

47. Have you had contact with the police since getting status?
[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

48. Did you get the help that you needed? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

49. Did you think that you were treated fairly? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

Section 3e Legal services

50. Have you had contact with a lawyer since getting status?
[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

51. Did you get the help that you needed? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

52. Did you think that you were treated fairly? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

Section 3f Education

53. Do you take part in any form of education?
[WRITE IN AND COMMENT – SCHOOL, COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY etc]

54 [If you have children], do your children take part in any form of education?
[WRITE IN AND COMMENT – SCHOOL, COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY etc]

55. Are you happy with the school(s) they attend?
[WRITE IN AND COMMENT: PROBE FOR QUALITY OF SCHOOL,
DIVERSITY OF SCHOOL, PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT etc]

56. Did you have any difficulties in accessing education since getting status? [WRITE IN]

Section 4. Language and Learning English

[READ OUT: Now I'd just like to ask you a few questions about language]

57. Have you ever experienced any English language issues?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

58. Have you ever been offered an interpreter? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

59. Are you or anybody in your family attending English language classes?

1. YES. If so, who provides the classes? When do you or members of your family attend (day / evening)? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

And did you or your family encounter any problems in finding a class?
[WRITE IN]

2. NO. If not, do you think you or any member of your family would benefit from attending a class? [WRITE IN]

60. Would you say that your use of English is good? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

Section 5. Living in the community

[READ OUT: I'd now like to finish by asking you some questions about the community that you live in]

61. Are you happy living in your area (previously mentioned)?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

62. Do you feel safe living there? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

63. Have you ever felt threatened while living there? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

64. Have you or your family ever experienced racism while living there?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

65. Are you involved with a local faith group or place of worship [church / mosque / temple / other / none]? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

66. Are you involved with any community groups? Can you tell us about any involvement? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

67. Since you received status, have you made new friends here in Glasgow outside your own cultural or faith group?
[IF DOESN'T LIVE IN GLASGOW, ASK ABOUT THE PLACE THEY LIVE]
[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

68. Do you feel like part of the community you live in? [WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

69. And have you been able to keep your own identity within the wider community? [WRITE IN]

70. If you needed any help or advice, would you have someone you could talk to?
[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

71. Finally, is there anything else that you would like to add? [WRITE IN]

[THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY]

RESEARCHERS:

How long did this interview take?

How long did the writing up take?

For additional information

Question No.

Comments

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