

New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities

2014 - 2017

Final Report: Key Messages



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Anna from Turkmenistan
Working in welfare rights.



Souad from Algeria
Hygienist in Glasgow.



Dylan from Iran
Glasgow University
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Community
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Former Commonwealth
Games medal-winner.
Engineer in Aberdeen.



Nyatwa from Zimbabwe
Primary school teacher
in Glasgow.

This key messages booklet is a short summary of the New Scots: Integrating Refugee in Scotland's Communities 2014-2017 Final Report.

The full report is available online: www.gov.scot/newscotsfinalreport

“We are living in times of unprecedented displacement driven by conflict and persecution. The New Scots strategy provides an excellent example of how to effectively integrate some of the world’s most vulnerable and allow them to give back to the society that has so warmly welcomed them. It provides a holistic approach to integration and recognizes the critical importance of not differentiating entitlements based on the manner in which refugees arrive in the country. The leadership shown through this approach, particularly in a time when we see asylum space shrinking in other parts of the world, is highly commended by UNHCR.”

Gonzalo Vargas Llosa,
UNHCR’s Representative to the UK.

“Three years ago, this landmark strategy – New Scots – set out to support refugees and asylum seekers to settle and make their homes in our communities. Since then, many organisations have worked together to ensure access to all the support and services refugees and asylum seekers need to begin to rebuild their lives and become active members of communities across Scotland.”

Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities

“The New Scots strategy has attracted considerable attention from a national and international audience. Scotland is recognised as one of the few refugee receiving countries to make active and sustained investment in addressing the needs for integration amongst refugees and the communities in which they live.”

Dr Alison Strang, Chair of New Scots Core Group, Queen Margaret University

“In 2013 we could never have anticipated the overwhelming response of Scottish local authorities to the resettlement of Syrian refugees and how this would change the challenge of refugee integration.

We now have refugees living in communities across Scotland and the New Scots strategy has provided an invaluable framework for those in areas new to hosting refugees.”

Councillor Harry McGuigan, COSLA

“As Scotland’s refugee charity, Scottish Refugee Council has been honoured to work closely with the Scottish Government, COSLA and many other public, third-sector and community organisations to build a Scotland where refugees are supported from the first day they arrive. Working with many partners, significant progress has been made towards ensuring refugees can achieve their full potential in Scotland and be active New Scots in their new communities.”

John Wilkes, Scottish Refugee Council

According to international law, a refugee is a person who:

Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Article 1(A) 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

An asylum seeker is a person who has applied to be recognised as a refugee.

There are also distinct forms of complimentary and humanitarian protection which provide rights and entitlement similar to refugee status.

Under current constitutional arrangements, asylum matters are reserved to the UK Government and handled by the Home Office. This includes operation of the asylum system, provision of asylum accommodation and support, and the management and decisions related to UK resettlement programmes.

Many of the services which are essential to support refugees to integrate into our communities, including health care, housing and education, are devolved to the Scottish Government.

The New Scots approach has always been to enable all refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into our communities from day one of arrival and not just when refugee status is granted.

Vision

For a Scotland where refugees are able to build a new life from the day they arrive and to realise their full potential with the support of mainstream services; and where they become active members of our communities with strong social relationships.

New Scots was developed through partnership as a three year strategy, by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council; working with many organisations across all sectors supporting refugees.

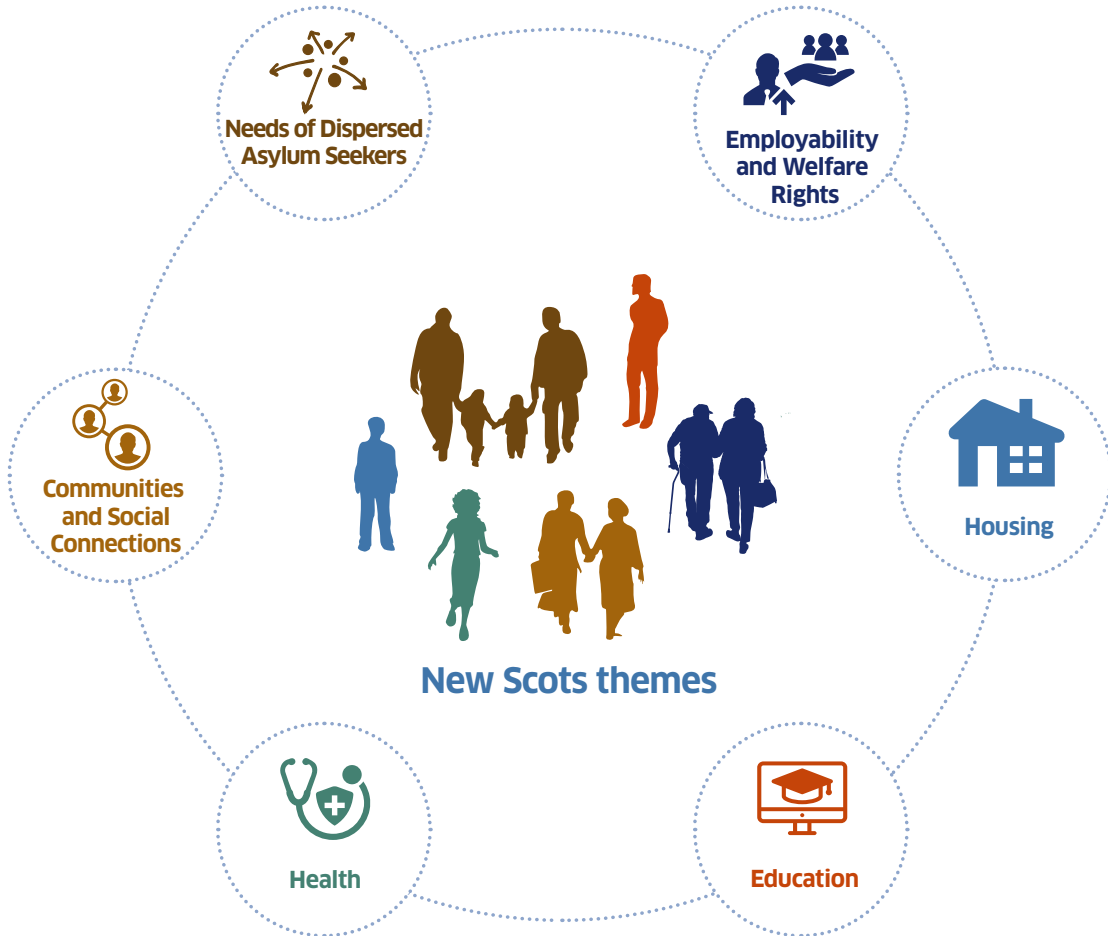
The scope of the strategy covers people seeking asylum, those recognised as refugees and those with another protection status. The term refugee is used to refer to anyone supported by the strategy. A distinction is only made where there is a technical or legal imperative in relation to the rights of each group or where failing to do so could obscure the meaning of the text.

New Scots established a framework to coordinate the efforts of all organisations involved in supporting refugees in Scotland in order to make Scotland a welcoming place to people seeking protection from persecution and human rights abuses.

We see integration as being a two-way process that involves positive change in both the individuals and the host communities, and which leads to cohesive, multi-cultural communities.

New Scots definition of integration

New Scots has encouraged innovative approaches to be piloted and partners to consider new ways of engaging with refugees and each other. Work across six key thematic areas has shown real benefits for those participating directly, and it is hoped will contribute to long-term integration and the development of more resilient communities.



Increasing Humanitarian Crisis

New Scots was developed prior to the increasing humanitarian crisis. By the end of 2015, 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, general violence or human rights violations. UNHCR estimated 12.4 million people were newly displaced, including 4.9 million people from Syria.

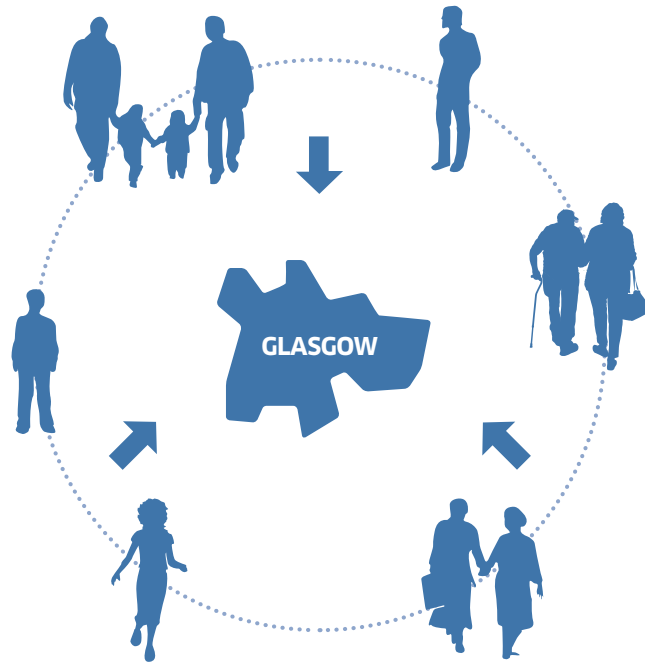
New Scots provided a strong base for Scotland's response to the humanitarian crisis. Networks and relationships established for the strategy were in place to build on, existing knowledge and experience was shared to inform actions and new organisations were brought in who could help with broader refugee integration in future.

Response Timeline

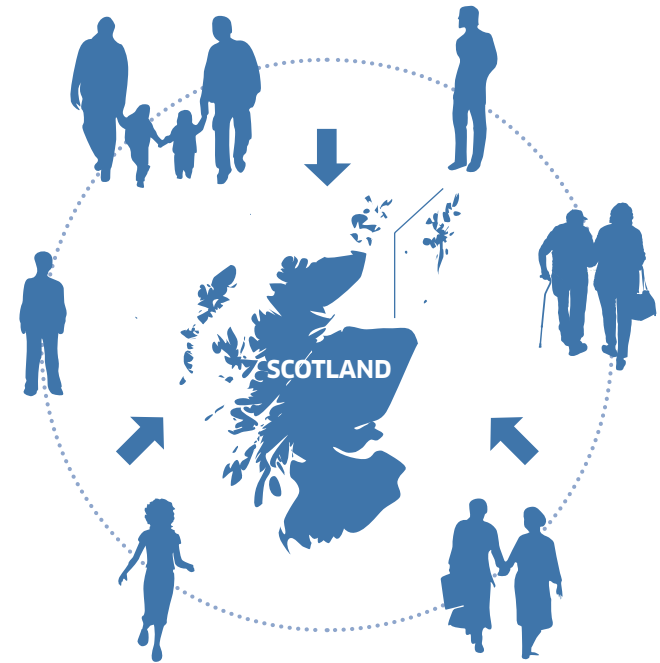
4 September 2015	First Minister hosts Refugee Summit Cross-political and sector representatives, including refugees, brought together to consider how Scotland could play a full role in responding. A Refugee Taskforce was established to coordinate Scotland's practical response to the crisis.
7 September 2015	UK Prime Minister commits to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees The Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement programme committed to resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees living in countries bordering Syria by 2020.
12 September 2015	Refugee Solidarity Events Thousands of people attended candlelight vigils across Scotland to send a message of support for Syrian refugees and all refugees who have died, fled their homes and lost their families as a result of war.

17 November 2015	<p>Scottish Local Authorities lead response</p> <p>Within weeks of the UK Government's announcement, all 32 of Scotland's local authorities had committed to supporting efforts to offer a place of safety in Scotland. The first charter flight bringing Syrian refugees to the UK landed in Glasgow on 17 November.</p>
November 2016	<p>Over 1,200 Syrian refugees welcomed</p> <p>One year after the first arrivals, Syrian refugees had been received across 29 local authorities, many of which had no previous experience of resettling refugees.</p>
March 2017	<p>Refugees continue to arrive</p> <p>The humanitarian crisis has not ended and Scotland continues to respond. Scotland remains committed to resettling our fair and proportionate share of the total number of Syrian refugees resettled to the UK. As practical arrangements have become established across Scotland's partners have sought to bring the learning from the response back into New Scots for the benefit of all refugees.</p>

Before October 2015
Asylum seekers arrive to Glasgow
Most refugees live in Glasgow



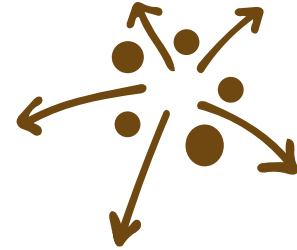
After October 2015
Refugees arrive to communities
across Scotland



Syria Vigil in George Square, Glasgow, September 2015
Photo by Angela Catlin



Needs of Dispersed Asylum Seekers



Key Achievements:

- The New Scots Asylum Dispersal thematic group secured commitment from a wide range of partners to meet regularly and seek to address challenges.
- The development of an Asylum Seeker Journey document mapped the services and support an asylum seeker needs to access during the application process. This identified pressure points in the current system to help inform action.
- Work has continued throughout New Scots to collate best practice from both Glasgow and the UK as a whole, to inform the work of partners.

Case Study

Asylum Seeker Journey

The asylum process is complex. Asylum seekers are often adapting to an unfamiliar country with a different culture, rules and public services to their home country. They may not speak English. They may have experienced violence, persecution or trauma. They may have lost family and friends and could be separated from everyone they know.

There are many different sources of support and information for people seeking asylum. Changes to Home Office advice and support contracts in 2014 have given rise to particular pressure points.

The Asylum Dispersal Thematic Group decided to map the legal and support journey for someone seeking asylum in Scotland. To highlight the different agencies and services involved and identify the pressure points in the process.

There are many variables and complexities in the asylum process and support which is available (or not available) to different people depending on their circumstances.

A comprehensive document has now been developed. This will not only be used to address some of the key pressure points but also to share learning and experience with areas considering asylum dispersal in the future.



Employability and Welfare Rights



Key Achievements:

- Holistic Integration Service, a partnership which supported 1,885 refugees. Funded by Big Lottery Scotland and led by Scottish Refugee Council with Bridges Programme, British Red Cross, Glasgow Clyde College and Workers' Educational Association Scotland.
- Refugee customer journey mapping for resettled Syrian refugees. Scottish Refugee Council and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also co-developed and co-delivered a training master class to Jobcentre staff on the how to apply the Claimant Commitment to Refugees.
- Revisiting the 2010 Scoping Study on recognition of refugees' and migrants' prior learning and qualifications.

Case Study

DWP resettlement work

Refugees arriving under the Syrian Resettlement Programme are entitled to work and access benefits. Access to benefits and Job Centre Plus services would enable them to settle into their new communities and start to rebuild their lives.

To support this, the DWP appointed a Scottish Refugee Coordinator. A refugee customer journey was developed and shared with Work Coaches to help them support refugees toward employment.

The lessons learned from this dedicated work is now helping to inform the DWP approach to supporting newly recognised refugees and to further inform New Scots work.

In a single Scottish Jobcentre, where Work Coaches actively engaged with Syrian refugees, by the end of the first year of the resettlement programme:

- 1 refugee was self-employed
- 3 were on a DWP training programme
- 1 was undertaking Work Experience
- 5 were attending a Further Education college course 1 day per week in hairdressing
- 1 had started full time at college
- 1 was awaiting an application for full-time education



Housing



Key Achievements:

- Despite the speed and scale of the response to Syrian resettlement in Scotland, the use of temporary accommodation was largely avoided, enabling refugees to settle into suitable long-term accommodation as soon as they arrived.
- Recognition that the needs of refugees must be incorporated into housing options approaches across Scotland.
- Improvement of understanding of refugees' rights amongst housing practitioners across Scotland through training, awareness raising and the updated practitioners guide produced by Scottish Refugee Council.

Case Study

North Lanarkshire Resettlement

North Lanarkshire Council committed to helping 180 Syrian refugees as part of the UK Government's Syrian Resettlement Programme.

To help the families settle, a multidisciplinary team was set up with representatives from the Council, NHS, local housing associations and the voluntary sector.

Each family has a core support team. The core teams help families settle into their homes, assists with welfare advice, registering with health services and getting to know the local area. A team of volunteer befrienders also support the refugees in developing social connections.

The children are thriving in school and the families are engaging with people and groups within their local communities.

One year after the first Syrian families arrived, North Lanarkshire's Syrian Resettlement Project Team received the Chartered Institute of Housing's 'Team of the Year' award.

”...extremely positive responses from the refugees themselves and their experience of settling in to North Lanarkshire Communities. This is what makes everything we do worthwhile...”

Councillor Barry McCulloch, Convener of Housing and Social Work Services



Education



Key Achievements:

- Commitment to the actions from a broad group of partners has enabled improvements to progress. This particularly benefitted the co-production of guidance and information on entitlements to education and associated support.
- Events which brought education practitioners together with refugees or organisations with knowledge and expertise of refugee issues have improved awareness and helped address barriers identified by New Scots. For example, Bilingualism Does Matter workshops and Scotland, People, Languages Forum event.
- Local partnerships have worked to address unmet demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), particularly by working to improve understanding of demand through better data capture and linking providers.
- Refreshed ESOL Strategy for Scotland.

Case Study

Bilingualism Does Matter

As Scotland has welcomed refugees across the country, many schools have had their first experience of children and young people who are developing bilingual speakers.

A seminar called ‘Bilingualism Does Matter’ was developed to help support teachers working with bilingual children from refugee families. A partnership involving the University of Edinburgh, SCILT Scotland’s Centre for Languages and Glasgow City Council’s English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service prepared and delivered the seminars using their organisation’s existing expertise.

Seminars were delivered in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness in Autumn 2016. They were all oversubscribed. Those who were able to attend all felt that their needs were fully or partly met by the seminar.

Although developed for New Scots, the skills developed through the seminars will help support all bilingual learners.

”The seminar provided “very important and useful information regarding bilingualism and helped me to understand how I can help my bilingual pupils using different ways to support them in the classroom.”

Teacher



Health



Key Achievements:

- Scottish Government engagement in the Health thematic group has ensured national health strategies are informed by refugees' health needs where appropriate.
- Membership of the group widened to include health leads from local authorities resettling Syrian refugees, securing a Scottish wide input. This supported shared learning and an improved, joined up approach to health provision for refugees.
- A learning session was delivered to local authority lead officers working with newly arrived Syrian refugees. This session included sharing Glasgow's experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees from a health perspective, including both primary and secondary care as well as responses to mental health wellbeing.

Case Study

Community Champions

Lubna has been living in Scotland for 14 years. She became a refugee Community Champion after a friend gave her information about the project.

The Community Champion project aimed to train people from the asylum seeking and refugee community to play a lead role in challenging mental health stigma and discrimination in their local communities.

” It felt easy to express my experience though at first I was not sure if I could talk about what happened to me.

But when I heard and saw the video clips it kind of motivated me to speak out without fear. I felt free.”

Lubna

The training took place over eight weeks. One of the aims was to give Community Champions the confidence to speak about mental health and to share their awareness of issues which can impact their community. Lubna volunteered to be part of a discussion panel which followed the screening of a film called 'Seeking Refuge'. 40 people, from a variety of backgrounds, attended the screening. Lubna contributed to discussions on the mental health impact of being a refugee.



Communities and Social Connections



Key Achievements:

- Public attitudes toward refugees in Scotland have been upheld. The public have embraced campaigns to welcome refugees and community groups have sought opportunities to provide support.
- Community work with refugees by Police Scotland expanded across the country.
- The expansion of Refugee Festival Scotland has provided more opportunities to promote the culture and traditions of refugee communities and encourage engagement with wider society. The geographic reach of the festival and the number of organisations involved has also increased.

Case Study

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees

During 2015, public awareness of international refugee emergencies increased. Many faith and community groups felt motivated to take practical action to help refugees, many for the first time.

In Autumn 2015, Scotland's main Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Interfaith organisations formed a new partnership project to coordinate and promote action in Scotland to support refugees and asylum seekers. Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees builds on the experience of faith-based humanitarian and integration projects, both at home and overseas.

In January 2017, the Edinburgh Weekend Club began, based on a successful model run by Interfaith Glasgow. The programme aims to create space for friendships between people of different religions, cultures and nationalities to flourish.

”Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees has provided a one stop shop for information and advice about work that is being done to support refugees here in Scotland and around the world. Having a voice from the faith communities that speaks out on behalf of those of us involved in supporting a variety of initiatives is invaluable.”

**Rev Shuna Dicks,
Moray Supports Refugees**



Photo by: Angela Catlin



Conclusion

In Scotland, there has been broad support for humanitarian action to help refugees and offer a place of safety. New Scots has not underestimated the challenges of successfully supporting refugees and the communities they settle in. Nor does it presume universal acceptance for refugees.

Integration is a long term process. While it is important for early engagement to help support refugees to settle and meet their immediate needs, longer term support is also necessary for both refugees and the communities they have made their home.

A key achievement of New Scots have been establishing the collaborative networks which form the basis of the thematic groups and enable sharing of experience, good practice and awareness more broadly as part of a coordinated approach.

New Scots has made real progress in:

- Collating and sharing existing good practice to support refugees.
- Identifying barriers to access the services and support refugees need and considering ways to improve processes to reduce these barriers.
- Raising awareness of refugees and understanding of their experiences.

Work across all six thematic groups has contributed to improving support for refugees in Scotland. Work to address immediate needs from health and welfare benefits to accommodation has made real progress for refugees initial experience of life in Scotland.

The needs and priorities of refugees will change as they begin to rebuild their lives. It may take time for the full effect of their trauma or experiences to have an impact. As people settle their priorities and aspirations may change, particularly as opportunities to pursue their ambitions develop.

New Scots aimed to instil long-term benefits by improving access to mainstream services and supporting refugees to pursue opportunities for education, employment and engagement in their new community.

There remain significant challenges for refugees living in our communities. Commitment has been made to develop a new strategy, building on the experience and progress of New Scots. New Scots will continue in partnership to make Scotland a welcoming place to people seeking protection from persecution and human rights abuses.



Cameron from Iran
Self-employed in finance
and web design.



Peashang from Iraq
Interpreter in Glasgow.



Mehdi from Iran
Owns a food outlet in
Glasgow.



Angie
Masters student in
Human Rights Law.





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