

“WE STARTED LIFE AGAIN”: INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEE FAMILIES REUNITING IN GLASGOW

Research report



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Research report

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Refugee Support and International Family Tracing, West Scotland

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We thank the European Integration Fund for co-financing this project. We hope that by highlighting the experiences of families being reunited in Scotland this report will help to implement positive change in policy and practice both in Scotland and across the rest of the UK.

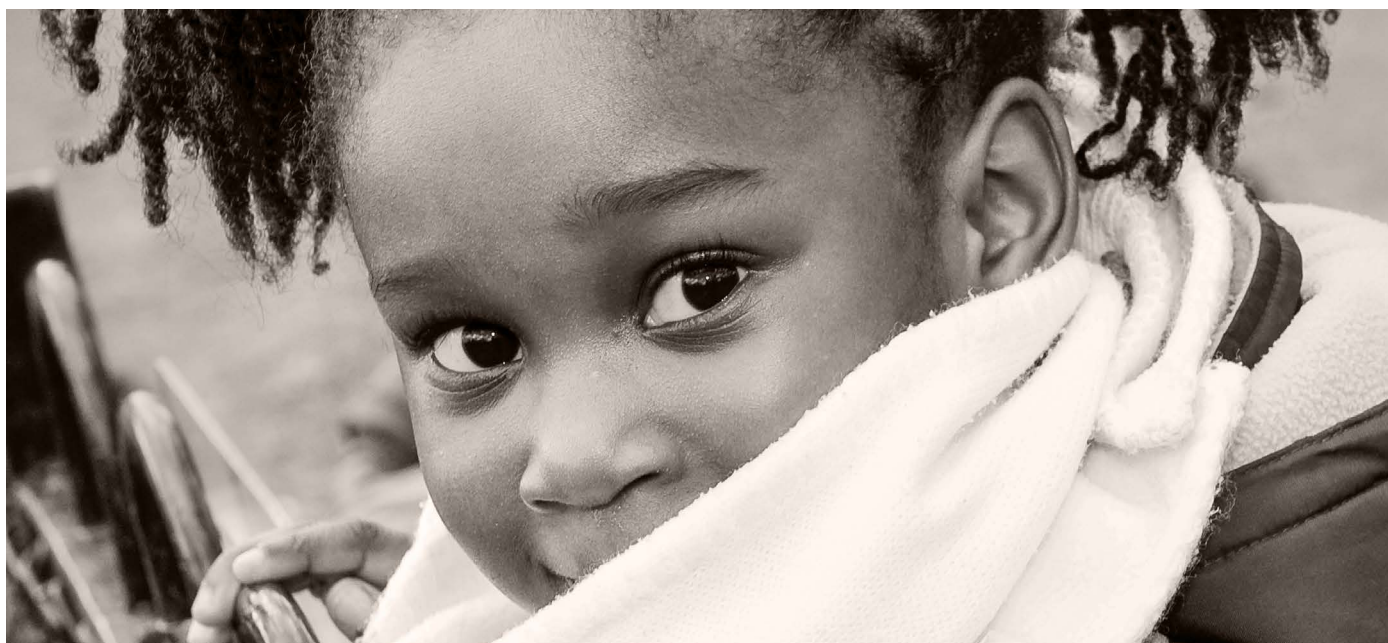
This research was conducted through the Third Country National Family Integration Service. This project was led by the British Red Cross in partnership with Scottish Refugee Council and Workers' Educational Association Scotland:



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Foreword

The United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has been entrusted with the responsibility for providing international protection to refugees and other persons within its mandate and, together with governments, to seek permanent solutions to their plight.

Separation of family members during forced displacement and flight can have devastating consequences on peoples' well-being and ability to rebuild their lives. Family unity is a key priority of many refugees and others with international protection needs, and their integration process may be greatly facilitated by reunion with close relatives, whose presence can help them restart their lives.

Bringing families together can also serve as a protection tool. States may be able to save lives through facilitated family reunion between refugees in Europe and family members who have also been forced to flee. UNHCR has explicitly promoted this in the context of the Syria emergency, where countless families have been separated. Enhanced family reunification systems can also represent a responsibility-sharing gesture for countries in the region of origin of refugees, through resettlement or humanitarian admission based on family links criteria.

Increased family reunion channels could also remove a powerful incentive for many third country nationals to move onward in the European Union. Applying correctly the family and discretionary criteria under the Dublin Regulation, as well as more flexible approaches to family reunification in general, could address this issue to the benefit of individuals as well as states, through reducing costs and unnecessary procedures, and enhancing integration.

The Third Country National Family Integration Service is a pioneering initiative and its laudable aim of improving the integration prospects of families who need assistance post reunification is to be welcomed and encouraged.

Alexander de Châlus

Legal Protection
UNHCR in the United Kingdom



Clarification of key terms

The terms surrounding family reunion and the status of new arrivals are potentially confusing. This section aims to explain the terms and clarify how we have used these within this research.

Family reunion – Within the UK, family reunion is the name of a specific immigration category only available to family members of refugees and those with humanitarian protection (under Part 11 of the UK Immigration Rules). Those entering the UK have family reunion visas which give the person entitlements that mirror those of the refugee sponsor. More broadly, the term family reunion is used to describe a whole series of social and emotional processes that occur alongside and beyond the legal process. Family reunion is a goal and aspiration that many live with for years, as they endure periods of extended separation and often anxiety about other family members' safety. Family reunion is also used to describe the actual moment of reunification, a key marker in accounts of their life histories. Family reunion is then used to describe the social and emotional processes of re-establishing family relations, a process that occurs over time and involves the reconfirmation of emotional bonds.

Third country national (TCN) – Within Europe, the term third country national is used to describe non-EU citizens on a range of different types of visas, including family reunion visas.

Within this research we have chosen to use the terms 'reuniting refugee families' or more generally 'refugee families',¹ rather than TCN families, in line with the fact that these families have been separated because of persecution. This recognises that these families have been enabled to reunite under discretions available only to sponsors with refugee status or humanitarian protection. It also reflects the fact that the entitlements of family members in the UK following reunion mirror those of their sponsor.

It is important to clarify, however, that those arriving on family reunion visas have not been recognised by the UK government in their own right as refugees. Their visas are entirely dependent on the refugee sponsor. If a family separates the new arrivals would have to go through the asylum process to claim refugee status. When referring to arriving individuals we have used the terms 'new arrivals' or 'people arriving on family reunion visas'. We have chosen to avoid using the term 'TCN', because this can refer to a much broader range of people on other settlement visas with different entitlements and restrictions. Practice has shown that this term can cause unnecessary confusion about entitlements and the fact that these people are family members of refugees.

¹ In these contexts the term refugee is used to include those granted refugee status and humanitarian protection.



Summary of analysis and recommendations

The Red Cross Movement has a long history of involvement in working with families separated by conflict and other humanitarian disasters. The British Red Cross identified that refugees and their families in the UK were experiencing integration challenges after reunion. Reunited families were increasingly presenting at Red Cross destitution services and required practical support to navigate and access complex UK systems such as housing, benefits, education and health.

In response the TCN Family Integration Service was set up in Glasgow to pilot integration support for reunited refugee families. The service ran between April 2014 and June 2015 in partnership with Scottish Refugee Council and Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Scotland.

This research focusses on the integration experiences of families who accessed this service. This section provides an overall summary of the analysis and highlights key recommendations. The British Red Cross believes that implementing these recommendations would help to improve reunification experiences and integration for people going through family reunion.

Overall analysis

Reunion: another transition crisis point

This research indicates that the period immediately after family reunion can be another transition crisis point in integration pathways for refugees and their families when they are at a higher risk of experiencing destitution and homelessness or severe overcrowding. This period mirrors ‘crisis points’ that have been identified at other transitions, such as during the move on period after a person gets refugee status.

Families with children are more likely to experience problems because of the longer time it takes to process Child Tax Credit compared with other benefits and because they usually need to move to larger accommodation.

The systematic risks of destitution and homelessness are particularly concerning because they place additional strain on reuniting families at a critical time as they attempt to rebuild a home together after years of separation and disrupted family life. Destitution and homelessness could be avoided for many people with planning for arrival and coordination between local authorities and refugee support agencies and refugee sponsors.

Need for orientation and integration support

This research confirms that in many instances refugee sponsors will not be in a position to fully support their family’s integration. Refugee sponsors, particularly those who are themselves relatively new arrivals, often do not have enough knowledge of systems and public services in the UK to help their families navigate these. There is a need for orientation and integration support services for re-uniting families post-arrival. Not only do families need knowledge of their rights, entitlements and responsibilities, most also need advocacy and support in order to access services, particularly those which are complex to navigate, such as the housing and benefits systems, or that the sponsor has no previous experience of accessing, for example schools.

A comparison with families in West Yorkshire indicated that families with no integration service lacked awareness of their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, which made the integration process more challenging. With no specialised support service benefits processing problems and housing issues went unaddressed for longer periods of time. These families faced substantial hardship as a result.

Integration provision gaps: young people

This research highlights a gap in clear pathways and opportunities for young people’s integration. This was particularly apparent for those aged 16-18 years old with younger siblings starting school. Young people arrive in Scotland at a critical stage as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Young people involved in the project were eager to learn English, to find training opportunities and employment or to progress to further education as soon as possible. To enable their integration, it is crucial that they are given sufficient opportunities as soon as possible to access language classes, progress with educational opportunities and develop friendship groups. Yet, young people have encountered challenges which can delay their opportunities for integration and self-development.

Long waiting lists for college and the periodic intakes of courses, often resulted in young people being left without clear options. As a result many expressed feelings of boredom and frustration that they were falling behind in their education and were unable to pursue options for the future.

The project observed that it was common practice to direct young people who were over 16 to college, rather than exploring more widely the options available for language and educational progression. For most, studying English was the priority, even though young people had on average higher levels of English on arrival than other adults. However, in some instances young people who had high levels of English language were also directed first to language courses.

For those who are able, school provides a rich environment for integration with a fuller programme of activities and the chance to join a cohort of peers. Where this is not possible a pathway for language and skills development that enables progression with a cohort of peers would be beneficial. The research shows the need to explore options to respond to their best interests of each individual young person, in line with the practice framework outlined by Getting it Right for Every Child.² All options should be considered including enrolment in school, access to intensive specialized English language and life skill courses and access to other college and short-term courses and training opportunities.

Risks of dependency and impacts on integration

The research identifies that arriving family members can face various types of dependencies on the refugee sponsor. Because a much higher proportion of arriving adult family members are women, there is an important gender dimension to this.

Legally, there is a structural dependency on the sponsor because the arriving family members' leave to remain in the UK is fundamentally dependent on the sponsor's refugee or humanitarian protection status. Critically, new arrivals have no independent right to remain in the UK if family relationships break down. They would need to obtain legal advice to explore any other options to remain in the UK.

Economically, there are further issues. The arriving spouse will usually make a joint benefits claim which will normally go into the main recipients' bank account. This is often done to ensure benefits are processed as quickly as possible, but it can lead to financial dependency on the refugee sponsor. Arrangements can be made to set up joint bank account, or for child benefits to go into a different account where applicable. Providing families with information about these options is important.

Within the family unit there are both potential resources to support integration and potential risks of dependency. New arrivals are likely to rely on the sponsor at least initially. Over time they may utilise the sponsor's social connections, knowledge and language skills to help them develop their own connections and language skills. On the other hand, they may remain reliant on the sponsor, which can curb language acquisition and their confidence to access services and build contacts independently.

The service was designed explicitly to provide opportunities for new arrivals to access language classes and develop social connections independently. The research has found that in the majority of cases new arrivals have been eager to take up these opportunities. However, some women have remained more socially isolated, reporting that childcare commitments and pregnancy have been barriers to them engaging in the service's educational programmes.

The risks of isolation are higher for women coming from cultural contexts where their roles have been focussed within the family, and where gender segregation of social spaces has been the norm. However, it cannot be assumed that this will be a barrier. The research indicates that families make different choices about how to re-negotiate roles

in the new context and shows that the majority of women have engaged in the service's activities. Nevertheless, it is important to give attention to the structural dependencies of new arrivals on the sponsor, and to recognise that these disproportionately affect women.

Overall recommendations

To the Scottish Government

- > Ensure that the specific needs of those arriving through family reunion are fully reflected within the New Scots Integration Strategy and its various subgroups.
- > Enable Local Authorities to issue a grant upon arrival to families who need financial assistance while awaiting mainstream benefits.
- > In line with Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015 – 2020³ work collaboratively to ensure that all refugee family members have prompt access to ESOL provision which takes account of the different needs of learners, recognises the critical role of English language skills in the integration process and creates clear progression pathways into further training, education and employment as appropriate.

To the UK Government

- > Ensure that the relevant government department provides support to families who, while awaiting mainstream benefits, require financial assistance to meet their basic needs.
- > Ensure that the needs of individuals arriving through family reunion are acknowledged and reflected in the policies of all departments with a role in refugee integration, including those responsible for education, language, housing, welfare and health.
- > Work with the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure access to language assessment and ESOL provision for arriving family members which takes account of the different needs of learners, recognises the critical role of English language skills in the integration process and creates clear progression pathways into further training, education and employment as appropriate.

³ Education Scotland. 2015, Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015 – 2020 The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Strategy for Adults in Scotland 2015. Edinburgh: Education Scotland [Online]. Available from www.education.scotland.gov.uk/Images/ESOLStrategy2015to2020_tcm4-855848.pdf

To the Home Office

- > Publish transparent and timely data on the number of people arriving on family reunion visas to join sponsors with refugee status or humanitarian protection.
- > Address the recommendations from the Red Cross (2015) *Not so straightforward: the need for qualified legal support in refugee family reunion* report to simplify the process in order to minimise the length, stress and impact of separation on sponsors and applicants and improve their starting point for integration post-reunion.

To Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs

- > Establish a ‘single point of contact’ in DWP and HMRC with an understanding of the refugee family reunion journey and family members’ rights, to enable smoother processing of all benefits claims and change of circumstance adjustments.
- > Ensure new arrivals understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements and are supported to access appropriate benefits in the shortest possible timeframe.
- > Inform all DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff about refugee family reunion and ensure they:
 - > know that applicants do not need a National Insurance Number for a benefits claim to be processed;⁴
 - > provide reunited families with information on how benefits can be paid, including explaining that benefits can be paid into a joint back account or an individual bank account.
- > Continue to work closely with Scottish Refugee Council and other refugee agencies to improve employability pathways for people arriving through family reunion.

To Local Authorities

- > Enhance coordination with the British Red Cross Travel Assistance programme in advance of families arriving to maximise early intervention and prevention of homelessness, overcrowding and destitution.
- > Disseminate the good practice developed with Glasgow City Council (GCC) Asylum and Refugee services team on housing pathways for reuniting families with other homelessness teams in GCC and to other local authorities and Registered Social Landlords across the UK to promote the implementation of similar protocols.
- > Work together with Housing Associations to create clear mechanisms to prevent or alleviate overcrowding, particularly in cases of vulnerability.
- > Education departments and in particular English as an Additional Language services to work with schools to facilitate enrolment for arriving children, and ensure free school meals and clothing grant applications are completed promptly.

To all public and voluntary sector agencies

- > Ensure the principles of early intervention, prevention and partnership working, as recommended by the Christie Commission⁵ are applied to people arriving through family reunion.
- > Provide refugee sponsors with relevant information and guidance on practical considerations, rights, responsibilities and options to enable them to prepare for their family’s arrival.
- > Ensure arriving family members are informed of their rights, responsibilities and options prior to arrival in the UK to allow them to prepare and make informed choices. Information resources should be developed and adopted, building on the project’s Welcome Booklet.

4 Department for Work and Pensions. 2015. Help available from the Department for Work and Pensions for people who have been granted leave to remain in the UK. London: Department for Work and Pensions [Online]. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/refugees-guidance-about-benefits-and-pensions/help-available-from-the-department-for-work-and-pensions-for-people-from-abroad#national-insurance-number

5 Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services. 2011 [Online] www.gov.scot/resource/doc/352649/0118638.pdf

To NHS Health Boards

- > Establish a 'single point of contact' with an understanding of the family reunion journey and refugee family members' rights, to work with the British Red Cross Travel Assistance programme prior to arrival to enable:
 - > prompt registration with health services for new arrivals;
 - > identification of immediate health issues or long-term support for new arrivals, and preparation to ensure that they are able to access appropriate services as soon as possible.
- > Provide specialist mental health and therapeutic support to families who require this, including specialist family therapy support, and signpost to community based and third sector services.

To Education Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council

- > Ensure options are available to 16-18 year olds to maximise their opportunity for English language progression, educational progress and overall integration through school entry, where applicable, or access to intensive language courses on arrival.
- > Improve applications processes for colleges and provide additional support to enable access to courses for people with limited English and/ or IT skills.
- > In line with recommendations made within research commissioned by Glasgow's ESOL providers⁶ ensure that there is sufficient and accessible ESOL provision, particularly low level classes in community settings.

To legal representatives

- > Provide information to those applying for Family Reunion about integration support services for arriving family members and protocols for accessing appropriate housing, health services and education for reunited family members.

To all stakeholders

- > Work in collaboration with the private sector, public sector, voluntary sector and local communities to create greater opportunities for building social connections through volunteering, mentoring and employment schemes.
- > Work with communities to support new arrivals to access information to improve understanding of life in Scotland, participate in community activities and develop support networks.
- > Work with local communities and businesses to encourage, support and promote the positive contributions and experiences of working with refugee families.

Issues for further research

The integration of reuniting refugee families is an under-recognised and under-researched area which would benefit from more in-depth, longitudinal research to trace integration pathways and identify key factors which influence outcomes. Specific issues identified for further research include:

- > gender dimensions to integration experiences within recently reunited refugee families and specific factors which either facilitate or hinder integration experiences;
- > integration opportunities and challenges for young people aged 16-18 years specifically and aged under 25 more broadly, comparing the experiences of those arriving through family reunion with research on unaccompanied minors;
- > how length of separation affects integration experiences of families in the UK, as well as relations and dynamics between family members;
- > comparison of integration experiences of reuniting refugee families with those of refugee families arriving through the asylum process and through resettlement programmes, drawing out where elements of good practice could be shared.

⁶ CJM Research. 2015, Glasgow's ESOL Providers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Glasgow: Research to help increase engagement Insert ESOL research in Glasgow Reference. [Online] Available from: www.glasgowlearning.org.uk/documents/2426



1 Introduction

The Red Cross Movement has a long history of involvement in working with families separated by conflict and other humanitarian disasters. Under international law the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)'s mandate during armed conflict includes working to reunite separated families. The ICRC works alongside National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to restore family links where people have been “separated from their families or without news of them following conflicts and other situations of violence, natural or man-made disasters, or migration as well as in other situations of humanitarian need.”⁷

Within the British Red Cross caseworkers supporting refugees through the family reunion process have become increasingly aware of the integration challenges facing families on arrival. Reunited families were presenting at Red Cross destitution services across the UK. An evaluation of the British Red Cross Family Reunion Pilot in Scotland, which supported sponsors through the family reunion application process from April 2011 until December 2012, observed key challenges facing reunited families that were beyond the scope of that project. Caseworkers observed that reunited families required practical support to navigate and access complex UK systems such as housing, benefits, education and health. They also recognised the challenges some families faced in rebuilding relationships after prolonged periods of separation.

The Red Cross has identified gaps related to integration of those arriving through family reunion at three levels:

- > at a service level, to enable families to access entitlements and play a full active role in Scottish life;
- > at a policy level, to ensure that the distinct challenges of this immigration route are recognised; and,
- > at a research level, where the issues of integration for reunited families were yet to be explored and evidenced.

Whilst extensive research has been conducted on the integration experiences of refugees in the UK,⁸ research on the integration of reunited families is minimal. This reflects a wider policy context in which refugee family reunion is largely ignored and information about family members arriving through this route remains opaque. The UK Government’s integration strategies over the last fifteen years have given fleeting or no recognition to family reunion as a factor in the integration of refugees in the UK.⁹

Previous reports by the British Red Cross have outlined the complexity of the application process and the support needs of refugees going through family reunion.

Family Reunion for Refugees in the UK: Understanding Support Needs (2011) highlighted that in the majority of cases refugees are unable to exercise their family reunion rights unless they have some form of support, and emphasised that the current scope of support provision is inadequate. With regards to integration, the report stressed the need for support beyond the arrival of family members and proposed further research on the integration needs of reunited families.

The Complexity of Refugee Family Reunion (2013) commissioned in response to cuts in legal aid for family reunion in England and Wales, outlined the difficulties refugee family members face in completing the application form and the barriers created by the costs involved. Furthermore, it indicated the negative effects of separation on mental health and well-being of family members, as well as how this disrupted and stalled integration for refugee sponsors.

The most recent report, *Not so straightforward: The need for qualified legal support in refugee family reunion (2015)*, builds further evidence of administrative, financial and legal complexities faced by family reunion applicants. It makes recommendations:

- > to the Ministry of Justice - to reinstate public funding for legal advice for family reunion;
- > to the Home Office - to simplify the family reunion application form;
- > to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office - to recognise the diverse protection and humanitarian needs of refugee family members, and work with embassies to consider ways of making the application process more accessible and safer for family members overseas.

The Scottish Refugee Council study *“One day we will be reunited”: Experiences of refugee family reunion in the UK, (Connell et al., 2010)* captured the learning that came out of its Family Reunion Service, which ran from 2004 until 2009. It provided the perspectives of professionals and refugees on the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of family reunion policy and procedures. It pointed to a range of emotional, practical, physical and financial impacts on separated families and stressed that, if integration matters at Scottish and UK levels, “family reunion should be prioritised as a matter of urgency” (2010: 51).

These gaps at a research, policy and service level created a starting point for envisaging a family integration service in Glasgow which aimed to address these issues.

⁸ For example, Ager & Strang, 2004, 2008; Atfield et al., 2007; Goodson & Phillimore 2008; Home Office, 2009; Strang & Ager, 2010; Mulvey, 2010, 2013; Phillimore, 2011; Cheung & Phillimore, 2013; UNHCR, 2013.

⁹ *Full and Equal Citizens: A strategy for the integration of refugees into the United Kingdom* (2000) makes one reference to the need to provide information on the family reunion process in relation to personal integration plans; *Integration Matters: The national integration strategy* (2005) and *Moving on Together: Government’s commitment to supporting refugees* (2009) make no reference to family reunion.



The Third Country National Family Integration Service

From December 2013 to June 2015, the British Red Cross in Glasgow worked in partnership with Scottish Refugee Council and Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Scotland to deliver the Third Country National Family Integration Service, co-funded by the European Integration Fund. This project piloted an operational service between April 2014 and June 2015 specifically for people arriving on family reunion visas joining refugee sponsors in Scotland. It provided support to more than 150 new arrivals in over 60 reunited families. The service piloted a broad approach that included casework, group work, ESOL classes and social activities. Scottish Refugee Council provided advice and support on housing, employment and welfare, and the Red Cross on education, health and well-being, and social integration. The service also provided strategic advocacy regarding the policy issues identified from the project learning. Both organisations responded to emergency destitution needs and helped signpost to other relevant agencies according to families' specific needs and interests.

The service offered all new arrivals over 16 years old the opportunity to engage in a regular programme of group activities. ESOL and IT classes were coordinated by WEA Scotland twice a week. The Red Cross ran a Life Skills programme providing orientation and educational support for integration, and organised a series of family social activities. These education sessions and activities have provided new arrivals and their families with the

opportunity to learn new skills, to gain information about life in the UK and explore the services available for them in their communities. They have enabled new arrivals to develop knowledge of their rights and entitlements. The programme has also created an opportunity to develop connections with other families who are new to the city to establish patterns of daily activity and routine which have important psychosocial benefits.

A welcome booklet was developed and sent to family members before they arrived in the UK, to give them information on the Family Integration Service and on what to expect in the UK. It described life in Glasgow and presented information on rights and entitlements to services across different integration domains.

The pilot project included two significant research studies that have started to address the evidence gap about the integration experiences of reunited families. This study aims to identify common barriers and structural obstacles to integration for families being reunited, and to examine how internal dynamics within the family affect integration experiences. A second study, detailed in a separate report, explores in more detail the health and well-being experiences of families who have been through the family reunion process.¹⁰ It aims to increase understanding of the particular stressors of separation and reunification and how these impact on health and emotional well-being.

¹⁰ www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Advocacy/Refugees/family-reunion-health-wellbeing-report

Overview of families

The TCN Family Integration Service provided support to families from a diverse range of backgrounds. A full description of the overview of statistics for 58 families (the number for whom data was available at the time of analysis) can be found in Appendix One. A summary highlighting salient characteristics of the families is provided here.

The most common countries of origin were Sudan (28%), Syria (15%) and Iran (14%), with smaller numbers from countries including Eritrea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Gambia. Almost half of the families spoke Arabic (47%) as their first language, whilst other languages spoken by three or more families included Farsi (14%), Urdu (7%), Tigrinya (5%), Tamil (5%) and English (5%).

Overall amongst new arrivals there were more children (59%) than adults (41%). In terms of gender, there was a slightly higher proportion of females (56%) than males (44%). However, these differences were more significant when we looked at adults and children separately. There were considerably more adult women (85%) amongst the new arrivals than men (15%). Conversely, there were more male children (62%) than female children (38%). Overall 88% of new arrivals were either women or children under 18.

The size and composition of families varied considerably. We identified three broad ‘types’ of family composition amongst reuniting families, those consisting of:

- > couples with one or more children (including children who were adult dependents);
- > couples only;
- > children coming to join a parent (who in some cases had a new partner or new children).

In terms of arriving family members, 48% of cases were a spouse and child(ren) arriving; 35% were a spouse only, the majority of whom were women coming to join husbands; and 17% were child(ren) only, in most instances arriving to join a single parent. Total family size varied from between two and nine people. It is important to note that in two-thirds of reuniting families children were among the new arrivals.

In most cases the sponsor was living alone previously, but in some cases they were already living with other family members. For those families that had been separated for longer periods, some children met new siblings or a parent’s new partner, and some parents were reunited with children who when they left had been too small to remember them.

Through the research we highlight where the differences in family composition appear to impact on particular integration pathways.





2 Background

The right to family life

A range of international and European legal instruments have acknowledged the importance of the family and its right to protection, including: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 16); the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) (article 8); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (article 23); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) (article 10); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) (article 9, 16); and, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (article 9, 10, 20, 21, 22). However, other than the Convention on the Rights of the Child, none specified the right to enter and remain in a particular country for the purposes of family reunification (ECRE, 2000).

The right to family reunion is not included explicitly within the articles of the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, the principle of family unity is highlighted as an essential right within the preamble text to the Convention, the 'Final act of the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons'. This recommends "Governments to take the necessary measures for the protection of the refugee's family especially with a view to: (1) Ensuring that the unity of the refugee's family is maintained particularly in cases where the head of the family has fulfilled the necessary conditions for admission to a particular country".¹¹

11 www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html (p10, part IV, B)



In February 2003, the Council Directive on the Right to Family Reunification was adopted in the European Union (Directive 2003/86/EC). Whilst this has become an important basis for family reunification within Europe, it is important to note that the UK chose to opt out. In July 2003, the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families came into force. Significantly, neither the UK nor any other Western European country has yet ratified the Convention. Whilst going further in recognising the rights of migrants and their families to fair treatment in receiving states, critics have suggested that both texts have not gone far enough in recognising rights to family reunification (John 2003).

Family reunification rights for forced migrants in particular have been assessed as being “weakly enunciated” (Kofman 2004: 253). In 2011 the European Commission published its Green Paper on the rights to family reunion (Directive 2003/86/EC) in response to attempts by Member States to set up more restrictive rules for family reunification. A recent EU Red Cross and ECRE report (2014) highlighted the inadequacy of current procedures for family reunification of beneficiaries of international protection across EU Member States, which has prevented many refugees and their family members from fulfilling their right to family life.

These limitations are contrary to the fact that family reunion rights are widely considered to be both essential to the individual’s well-being and in the interests of the receiving state (ILO, 1973; UNHCR, 1999; ECRE, 2000). Much research has shown that family reunification is an important step towards successful integration (Rousseau et al., 2004; John, 2003, ECRE & EU Red Cross, 2014; Connell et al., 2010; British Red Cross, 2011 & 2013; Strik, De Hart & Nissen, 2013; UNHCR, 2013). The responses of UNHCR (2012) and the European Red Cross National Societies (2012) to the EC’s Green Paper emphasised that family reunification aids the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in host societies, whilst separation between family members is detrimental to this process.

UNHCR's Executive Committee has reached a number of conclusions on international protection, including several commitments about family reunion. Whilst not binding, these represent an important consensus of opinions and guide the implementation of protection policies for the states who sit on the committee, which includes the UK. A thematic compilation of these conclusions has highlighted all that relate to family unity and reunification between 1975 and 2013. These include:

In application of the Principle of the unity of the family and for obvious humanitarian reasons, every effort should be made to ensure the reunification of separated refugee families.
(No. 24 (XXXII) – 1981, 1)

In order to promote the rapid integration of refugee families in the country of settlement, joining close family members should in principle be granted the same legal status and facilities as the head of the family who has been formally recognized as a refugee.
(No. 24 (XXXII) – 1981, 8) (UNHCR, 2014: 224)¹²

UNHCR's report *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration* has highlighted broader benefits of the family unit for integration in society (2002: 85):

- > Intact families have better chances of achieving economic sufficiency through pooling of resources
- > Family support can have positive influence on physical and mental health
- > Families units provide practical and emotional support during the integration process that otherwise may lead to additional requirements and ultimately investment by governments

Given the recognition of the importance of the family unit and the benefits that it can bring to integration, it is surprising that there has been so little focus on family members arriving through family reunion.

Family reunion: process, restrictions, entitlements

Family reunion is an immigration route available to specified family members of people with refugee status or humanitarian protection under Part 11 of the UK immigration rules (paragraphs 352A-FI).¹³ It covers pre-flight family members, specifically a spouse or civil partner, unmarried or same-sex partner, or dependent child under 18 years old. It does not cover *de facto* adopted children, other dependent adult relatives, or in the case of unaccompanied minors their parents and siblings. Neither does it cover post-flight family members, for example spouses or civil partners who became family members whilst the sponsor was living in a third country on route to the UK.

Family members in some of these groups can be granted discretionary visas on compassionate humanitarian grounds. The UK guidelines on the immigration rules now direct such family members to apply under other family settlement routes (e.g. under part 8 of the immigration guidelines) but the fees involved make this possibility prohibitive and out of reach to many.¹⁴

It is important to recognise that these legal provisions are based on normative ideas of the family within the UK, and may not always resonate with people's experience of family life in other cultural contexts. Examples of those who may be excluded include children in the pre-flight family who had been informally adopted by extended family members, or elderly dependant parents who may have shared the same household. The literature on family reunion has highlighted this mismatch between legal definitions of the family unit and diverse cultural experiences of the family (e.g. ECRE 2000; Staver 2008; Hawthorne 2007; Connell et al., 2010; McDonald-Wilmsen and Gifford 2009).

¹² www.refworld.org/docid/5538cfa34.html

¹³ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428684/Immigration_Rules_-_Part_11.pdf

¹⁴ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257465/familyreunion.pdf



Family reunion applications are almost always made out-of-country for ‘leave to enter’.¹⁵ If there is a British Embassy or High Commission in the family’s country of origin applications can be submitted there. Otherwise, family members have to travel to a neighbouring country to submit applications. This can be a dangerous and costly process and can present a significant barrier or delay to applications (British Red Cross 2013). As a settlement immigration route, family reunion does not recognise protection needs of family members, or take into account the risks often involved in the process of making applications.

However, there are certain discretions for the family reunion visa route compared with other family settlement visas. For those who fall within the eligibility criteria for family reunion the refugee sponsor does not have to meet the income threshold necessary for other family settlement visas. In addition, family members do not have to fulfil language requirements pre-arrival or take the Life in the UK test.

Arriving family members are granted leave to remain in line with the refugee sponsor’s leave to remain. Once in the UK their entitlements mirror those of the refugee sponsor. In relation to integration, this means that they have equal entitlements to:

- > access adequate housing;
- > seek employment and/or access benefits entitlements;
- > access language classes;
- > enrol in schools (for arriving children) and other education opportunities;
- > access health care provision;
- > access interpreting services, if needed, when engaging with statutory agencies.

It is important to emphasise that arriving family members’ visas and corresponding entitlements are entirely dependent on their relationship with the sponsor. This places arriving family members in a potentially precarious position. In cases of family breakdown the newly arriving family members lose their visa entitlements. If they then wish to remain in the UK they have to apply for leave to remain in their own right, which in practice usually means making an asylum application.

¹⁵ There are possibilities for in-country applications for ‘leave to remain’ in cases where family members are traced and found to already be in the UK applying for asylum.

Family reunion numbers

The number of refugee family members arriving through family reunion has been difficult to confirm due to a lack of transparent data. The most recent figures available for decisions are for 2010, when 4,885 cases (69%) of the 7,055 cases processed that year were granted.¹⁶ This compares with 9224 main applicants granted asylum on initial decision or appeal in 2010.¹⁷ More than seven times as many people arrived through family reunion as arrived through refugee resettlement programmes during the same period (695 people) during the same period.¹⁸

Statistics published by the Home Office indicate that 5,560 applications for family reunion were processed in 2014, but do not provide information on how many of these applications were granted.¹⁹ The number of applications processed in 2014 was lower than in 2010, which may reflect the withdrawal of legal aid for family reunion applications in England and Wales. This occurred in a year in which 10,024 people were granted asylum, a form of temporary protection or other type of grant on initial decision.²⁰

If we make the assumption that the same proportion were granted in 2014 as were granted in 2010, we can estimate that 3,850 family reunion applications were granted in 2014. However, it is important to note that because immigration rules regarding family reunion have become tighter over the intervening years the number of applications granted may well be lower.

In 2014, 787 refugees were resettled in the UK, including 143 under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme.²¹ Our estimated figure for family reunion arrivals in 2014 is almost five times greater than the number of people arriving through refugee resettlement. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the numbers of refugees and their families arriving through all these routes still represents a very small fraction of total net migration to the UK, which for 2014 was estimated to be 318,000.²²

16 Home Office (2011), Family Migration: Evidence and Analysis: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306889/occ94.pdf

17 5195 main applicants were granted asylum on initial decision and 4029 on appeal. See sections 8.2 and 9.2 of Immigration Statistics: October to December 2012 - www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2012/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2012. Note, these figures do not indicate the numbers of dependents included in these applications.

18 www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDF.pdf?docid=4f0ff0d9#xml

19 This figure was collated from Home Office statistics tables 'Additional Data on the Borders and Immigration System' for Jan- Mar 2014 and 'International Operations Transparency Data' for quarters 2, 3 and 4 of 2014.

20 8096 main applications were granted which included 1928 dependents. See sections 8.2 and 8.8) of Immigration Statistics: October to December 2014 - www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2014/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2014#asylum-1. In addition, 28% of the 8200 appeals received from main applicants were granted that year (see section 8.5).

21 www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2014/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2014#asylum-1

22 www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_404613.pdf



3 Research approach and objectives

Approaches to studying integration

There is a growing body of literature about refugee integration in the UK and different approaches to how we study it.²³ Most agree that integration is a complex and multi-faceted term. The definition used in the UNHCR *Refugee Resettlement Handbook* exemplifies this (2002: 12 citing ECRE, 1999, *Policy on Integration*):

Integration is “multi-dimensional in that it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees’ own perceptions of, acceptance by and membership in the host society.”

The aim of the Scottish Government's integration strategy, *New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities, 2014-2017*, is to support and enable refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives in Scotland and to make a full contribution to society. The Scottish Government, in contrast to the approach of the UK Government, acknowledges that integration begins on their first day a person seeking asylum arrives in Scotland rather than on the day that a person becomes a refugee.

²³ For a detailed review of the literature see Mulvey 2010.

This study has taken the Indicators of Integration Framework (Ager and Strang 2004) as the basis for examining the integration experiences of families being reunited in Glasgow. The framework is divided into domains covering different dimensions of integration. Those described as ‘means and markers’ consider access to services and opportunities: *employment, housing, education and health*. Others described as ‘social connections’ are labelled *social bridges, social bonds and social links* based on concepts drawn from the literature on social capital. A further layer considered to be ‘facilitators’ to the integration process are *language and cultural knowledge, and safety and stability*; and finally the ‘foundation’: *rights and citizenship*.

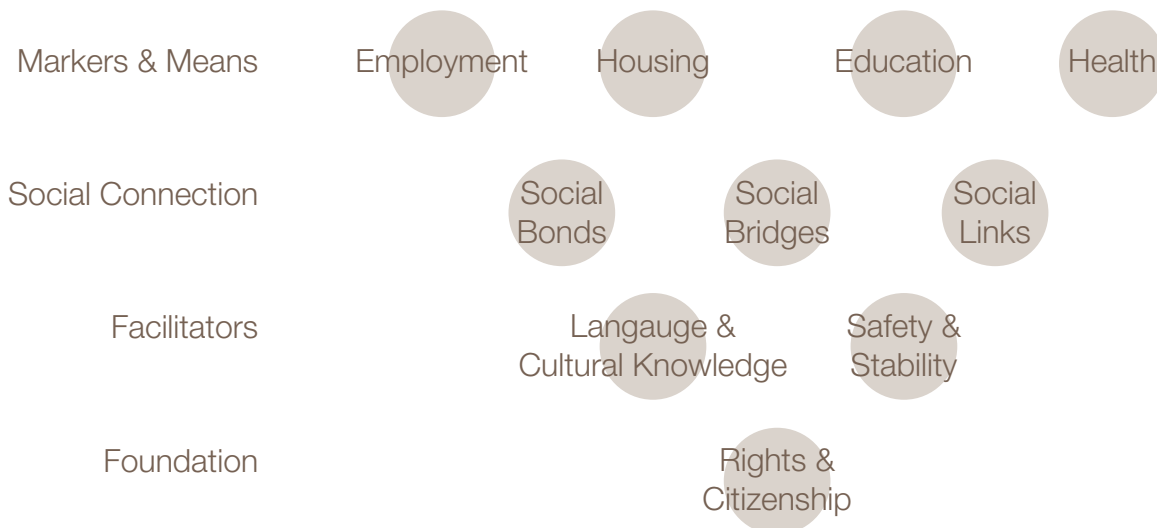


FIGURE 1 INDICATORS OF INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK (AGER AND STRANG 2004: 3)

Whilst Ager and Strang emphasise that creating a definition of integration was not the aim of their work, they suggest that a working definition is implicit within the framework:

An individual or group is integrated in a society when they:

- > *achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved by the wider host communities;*
- > *are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and*
- > *have sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (2004: 5).*

Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) reiterate that integration is a two-way process and that the framework is to be used flexibly, reflecting the complex multi-dimensional and multi-level nature of integration.

Subsequent research by Atfield et al., (2007) developed the idea of integration pathways further and suggested that integration pathways are more often interrupted than linear progressions. It emphasised the importance of studying refugees’ perspectives of their integration experiences and considered in particular the barriers to forming and accessing social networks. It assessed the benefits and resources a person receives through their connection with social networks in terms of ‘functional and immediate needs’, ‘emotional needs and belonging’ and ‘equality and empowerment’.

Mulvey (2010b) has considered the wider context of integration and highlighted the potential for conflicting interests of policies and practices at local and national levels: integration projects can be promoted at a local level, whilst structural and political barriers to integration are being created at a national level.

A 'family lens' on integration

Previous research has tended to focus on integration of individuals. This research has required us to bring a 'family lens' to understanding integration processes. We suggest that studying integration through a family lens has several steps:

- > Considering what integration means for a whole family unit rather than for an individual person.
- > Exploring how experiences of family members differ
- > Identifying interactive factors which influence the trajectories of different family members' integration pathways and experiences.
- > Recognising that relations within the family create potential resources for integration and also potential barriers.

Research objectives

The objectives of the research were to study the integration experiences of family members arriving through family reunion and:

- a) to identify common barriers and structural obstacles to integration for families being reunited
- b) to examine how internal dynamics within the family affect integration experiences

Research methods

The study employed a mixed-method design, collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data. Being embedded within a project team had huge advantages both to accessing and interpreting the data gathered.

Quantitative data

The quantitative analysis on integration indicators in this report is based on the data available for this cohort of 50 families including a total of 123 individuals who were reunited by March 2015. This represents the total number of families for whom more comprehensive data was available at the time of analysis, and excluded the recent arrivals. Scottish Refugee Council shared data on housing, benefits and destitution support to families involved in the project from its case management system. This was cross-checked in interviews with Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisors who provided clarifications and expert knowledge on how to interpret the data in relation to the housing process and the benefits system. Data on health and education indicators was drawn from the Red Cross database and interviews with caseworkers.

Qualitative data

The qualitative analysis is based on interviews with a total of 45 people in 14 families receiving the integration service, who had been reunited between May and December 2014. The sample of families interviewed reflected the range of countries of origin, size and composition of families on the project. Families came from Sudan, Iran, Syria, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Somalia, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Gambia. They included couples, families with children and families with child only arrivals.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 refugee sponsors, 11 newly arrived spouses, seven young people (16-22 year olds) and 16 children. Family members were interviewed both separately and in groups, in order to gain insight into multiple perspectives and experiences within the family. Adult family members were usually interviewed individually about experiences of separation and of being reunited again, and then together about experiences of integration. Almost all interviews with children were in sibling groups. Research questions and approaches were designed separately for adults, young people and children. Research with younger children involved visual exercises rather than direct

questions, in order to conduct the research in both a sensitive and engaging manner. Interviews were conducted through interpreters with all but three families. Families were given the option to be interviewed in the Red Cross office or in their own accommodation. On almost all occasions interviews were conducted in families’ homes.

Following the completion of interviews, all the families were invited to participate in focus group discussions. Four sponsors and 14 newly-arrived family members from six families attended. The families were split into groups of men, women, young people (16-22 year olds) and children. Families were asked about their experiences of accessing housing, benefits, destitution support, health services, language classes, education, local communities and services and for feedback on the service’s support. They were then asked more about their social connections and the kinds of support these provided.

Comparative group

The integration experiences of reunited families in Glasgow have been compared with a small sample of reunited families who have arrived over similar time period in West Yorkshire where there has been no integration service. We conducted semi-structured interviews in the Red Cross office in Leeds with five recently reunited families. The interview questions mirrored those asked to families in Glasgow. The families were then divided into focus groups of men and women to discuss the main challenges and barriers they had faced since arriving in the UK.

It is important to emphasise that analysis of the comparative group interviews should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive. The small number of families involved did not allow for the more systematic analysis that was possible for the much larger cohort in Glasgow.

Research scope

The research explores the diversity of integration experiences both within and between families. It highlights where differences in family composition appear to impact on particular integration pathways, for example where reuniting couples without children faced different issues to families with children, or where larger families faced more problems than smaller families. Similarly, it identifies differences in families where new arrivals have been children only. Within families it identifies where young people faced different issues to younger children, and where parents with childcare responsibilities had additional challenges compared with other adults.

The research highlights observations of where integration experiences have been affected by gender, age and family composition, however, a full statistical analysis of these factors was beyond the scope of the study.

Connections between domains and cross-cutting issues that have been identified are presented in certain sections. A more comprehensive analysis of these cross-cutting issues would require further analysis.

Learning from particular examples of good practice piloted through the service that have facilitated integration pathways are described. However, a full review of the programme impact was not within the remit of this report.





4 Context

There are several important factors which affect the starting points for reuniting families' experiences of integration. Arguably the most important is the length and impacts of separation experiences. It has not been within the scope of this research to analyse factors related to separation in detail. Nevertheless, this section provides a brief overview of key information collected through the study related to: length of separation and communication whilst apart; accounts of emotions and experiences on being reunited; and refugee sponsor's access to services in the UK prior to family members' arrival.

As mentioned previously, family reunion is not an option for all family members but focuses on immediate or dependent family members. As such even in 'reunited' families there may be ongoing separation with other family members, and differing expectations of what 'family' is. Within this section we focus on the separation of family members entitled to family reunion.

Family separation

In the context of those fleeing violence and persecution departure is often sudden and families frequently become separated. It is common that one member of a family is specifically targeted and is forced to leave others behind. In other cases families who initially flee together are later forced to separate on the way. The journey of flight is one that is full of risks, as so many of the legal routes to countries of exile have closed down. It is also costly; many families simply cannot afford for everyone to make the journey to seek asylum in a safe place together, or they choose not to expose all family members to the risks of the journey. For others, family life has been more complex and relatives have been separated for longer periods because of other pressures of their circumstances or family crises pre-flight.

More detailed information was available for 14 families interviewed for the integration research and an additional two families interviewed for the health and well-being research. All families had been separated for at least a year, whilst one had been separated for ten years.

LENGTH OF SEPARATION	NO. OF FAMILIES	%
1 - 2 years	10	63%
3 – 5.5 years	2	12%
6 - 10 years	4	25%

FIGURE 2 LENGTH OF SEPARATION OF REFUGEE FAMILIES

The length of separation varied due to several factors including the time it had taken a sponsor to get to the UK and to be granted asylum; and the time it had taken to apply for family reunion.

The length of separation was recorded from the time family members last saw each other to the time they were reunited in the UK. It is important to note that some families had also experienced periods of separation *within* their home country and saw each other only very briefly before the sponsor fled the country.

Some families lived through incredibly distressing experiences of not knowing the whereabouts of their relatives for weeks or even months. In five families husbands had been detained by armed forces in their country of origin.

Both sponsors and arriving family members mentioned feeling anxious and worried for their loved ones' safety whilst apart. Some shared that they had not been certain that they would ever see their relatives again.

Previous research has highlighted that family separation is a significant cause of anxiety that can have debilitating psychological impacts which hamper settlement and integration (RASNZ, 2012; Schweitzer et al., 2006; McDonald & Wilmsen, 2009). A number of studies have shown that the longer the period of separation, the poorer the outcomes when the family reunites and the harder it is to regain its balance (Derluyn et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2004).

Family reunion

Family reunion is generally seen as a positive factor for integration which provides the family with an opportunity to re-establish family life.

It marks a new beginning and for some the first opportunity for many years to live together as a family. The father of one family had been detained for long periods before he fled the country. His wife and son described what it was like to be reunited:

In this country we are all together and very happy. In Eritrea we are not happy because Dad was not there.
(Son, Eritrea)

It's very amazing. It's our first time together since we got married. We got married about ten years [ago]. We have never stayed for long together... always prison, or somewhere. But now we have a stable life. This is life, we started life again.
(Wife, Eritrea)

Another father described how it felt to be reunited:

I was happy to an extent that I couldn't believe myself that my wife and my kids are reunited, that I had been reunited with them again. I can't get out of my head how we lived apart. We are still talking about it, about what happened and how we lived.
(Father, Kuwait)

However, there are several reasons that reunion can be a time of new challenges alongside the happiness many experience in being together again. Reunion with relatives in the UK can occur alongside separation with other close relatives who remain in the home country. For families who are reunited after a considerable time apart relationships must be re-established, and new arrivals have to adapt to a new environment.

This research observed particular challenges for teenagers being reunited with parents they have not lived with for a long time:

It's actually hard when you're separated from your child then later on you meet. By the time you meet, sometimes it's hard to click. It takes time obviously.
(Mother, Zimbabwe)

The starting point for the integration of reunited families in the UK therefore is not necessarily an easy one. Families must adapt to changes in family relations and dynamics, whilst dealing with the wider challenges of being in a new environment.

Refugee sponsors' previous contact with services

Refugee sponsors were themselves at different stages along integration pathways when their families arrived. Those who had been here for longer periods were more likely to have moved into settled accommodation; to be in employment or acquired more training to progress towards employment; have improved language skills; and to have established social connections in the city.

It is important to note that many refugee sponsors had contact with the British Red Cross on family reunion matters before their family members arrived:

- > 36% of sponsors had accessed the Red Cross International Family Tracing service for help to trace their family members;²⁴
- > 79% had accessed pre-visa support from the Red Cross Family Reunion Support Project and/or assistance from the Red Cross Family Reunion Travel Assistance programme.²⁵

Where families had been known to the Red Cross they were given information about the Family Integration Service and referred if they wanted to take up this support. In other cases families had been referred from partner organisations or from external agencies in Glasgow.

The number of families using the Red Cross Family Reunion Travel Assistance programme has risen steadily over the last four years from 66 family arrivals (173 family members) in 2011 to 251 family arrivals (682 family members) in 2014.

It is also significant that many refugee sponsors accessed integration support before their families' arrival through the Holistic Integration Service for new refugees in Scotland. The Holistic Integration Service is led by Scottish Refugee Council in partnership with: the British Red Cross who provide enhanced support for refugees with complex situations; the Bridges Programmes who provide employability support; and Glasgow Clyde College and WEA Scotland who provide specialist ESOL classes.

35% of sponsors had accessed integration support from Scottish Refugee Council through the Holistic Integration Service within the last year, and 57% since the start of the service in May 2013. Integration Support Advisors provided information about rights and options, including to family reunion. 90% of sponsors had accessed Scottish Refugee Council services at some point either as asylum seekers or refugees. Overall, Scottish Refugee Council estimates that at least a quarter of new refugees accessing their services were seeking to bring family members to the UK through family reunion.²⁶

²⁴ Of those using the Tracing Service more than three-quarters also used the Red Cross messaging service to contact family members.

²⁵ 7% received pre-visa support only; 41% accessed both travel assistance and pre-visa support; 31% accessed the travel assistance only. Within these figures 4% had travel assistance applications cancelled after families arranged the flights themselves.

²⁶ SRC case records for the Holistic Integration Service indicate that between April 2014 and March 2015 a minimum of 24.5% new refugees were given advice from the caseworker regarding family reunion. This figure refers to 882 new refugees who accessed the service, of whom 487 then had a full assessment where they developed an integration plan (Strang et al., 2015). The proportion enquiring about family reunion at the full assessment stage is likely to be higher.



5 Integration experiences research findings

This section presents the research findings on families' integration pathways within different domains: housing; employment and welfare; health; language; education; and social connections. Within each section, we present information on indicators of integration drawn from the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the project. These have been selected to highlight key learning about integration trajectories both for families as a whole and for individuals within families.

The quantitative analysis refers to 50 families unless otherwise stated. Analysis of data for individuals specifies how many people the data refers to.

Each section begins by highlighting **key findings** related to the integration domain. Following a more detailed exploration of the research evidence, each section concludes with a summary of recommendations relevant to each domain.²⁷

Towards the end of some sections comparative information about experiences of a small number of families in West Yorkshire is presented in a separate box. These families did not have access to an integration service.

²⁷ Note: these thematic recommendations have been reformulated to address specific actors in the Overall Recommendations.

5.1 Integration experiences | Housing

Key findings

- > On arrival, families with their refugee sponsor still in the homeless process have faced fewer difficulties finding suitable accommodation than those whose sponsor has been in settled accommodation.
- > The housing protocol between Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council helped three sponsors of larger families move into suitable temporary accommodation before their families' arrival, and held flats on the day of arrival for other families.
- > 28% of families presented to homeless services on the day of arrival (22%) or within days (6%).
- > 26% of families stayed in overcrowded accommodation for between one and eight months, which sometimes involved family members sleeping on the floor. In some cases families chose to stay in overcrowded situations rather than moving into the accommodation offered.²⁸
- > By May 2015, 62% of families were living in suitable settled accommodation. For those who had moved into settled accommodation over the course of the project it had taken on average 100 days.

Housing is a key priority for families on arrival. Having a secure place to stay is a basic need and a hub around which other important aspects of integration revolve. Only 30% of families were able to move straight into a large enough secure tenancy. The majority of families lived in temporary accommodation or overcrowded settled accommodation whilst they waited to find or be offered appropriate settled accommodation. Information and support provided through the project as well as statutory and commissioned services was important to help people make informed choices.

This section considers three key issues related to housing integration pathways for reuniting families. Firstly, the family's housing situation at the time of reuniting and the differences according to whether the sponsor was living in temporary or settled accommodation. Secondly, the proportion of families experiencing overcrowding and what impacts this has had. Thirdly, families' experiences of progressing to settled accommodation. The final section presents other key points about housing experiences raised in the interviews.

28 In one further case a family was overcrowded on arrival for 12 days.

Housing on arrival

The following table gives a detailed breakdown of families housing on arrival:

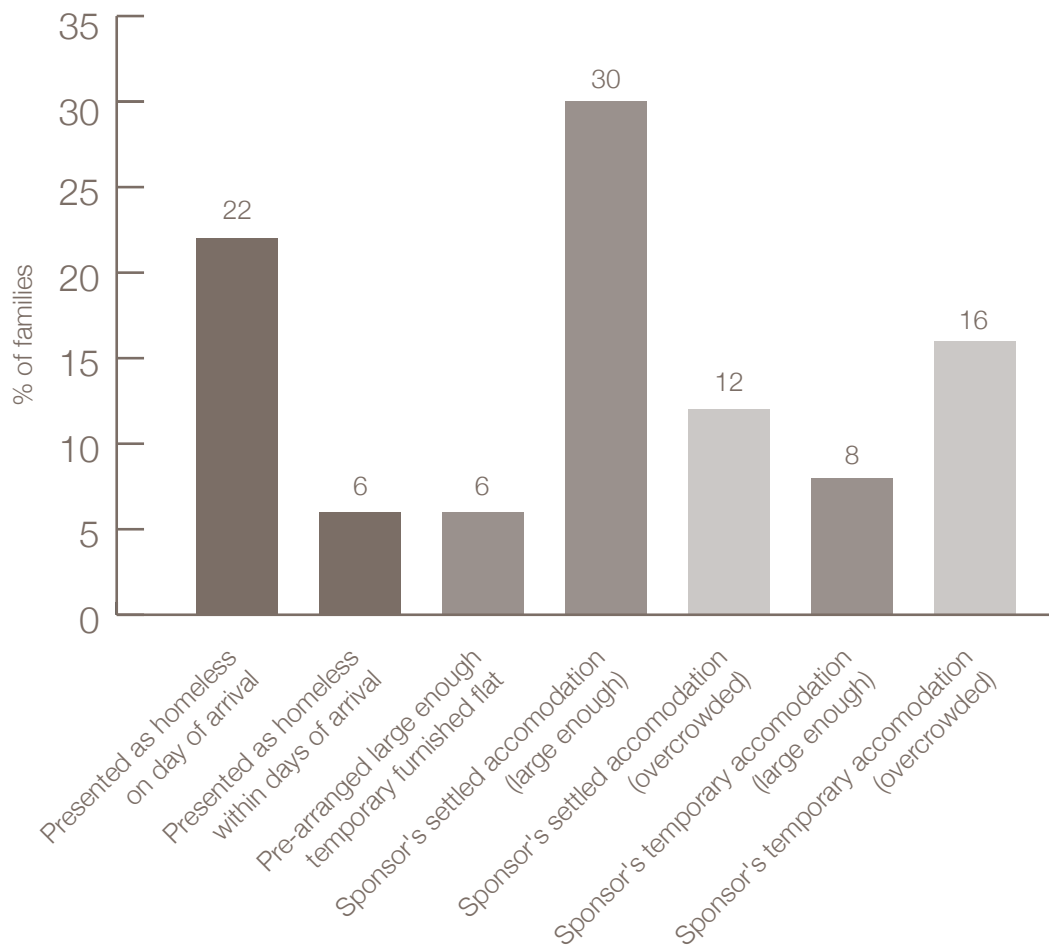


FIGURE 3 HOUSING SITUATION OF FAMILIES UPON ARRIVAL

In 30% of families, new arrivals were able to move into large enough settled accommodation that the refugee sponsor was already living in. These were primarily cases where the new arrival was a spouse only so no additional room was required, but also included one case where the new arrival was a child and two cases where the new arrivals were a spouse accompanied by one child. In a further 8% of families new arrivals were able to move into large enough temporary accommodation that the sponsor was already living in. This was not possible where the sponsor was living in a hostel or for larger families. In two cases married couples decided they did not want to stay with their extended families, and so subsequently moved out.

28% of families presented to homeless services on the day of arrival (22%) or within days (6%). In all but one of these cases these were families with children. In most of these cases families went straight from the airport to the Hamish Allan centre on the day of arrival.²⁹ In three cases families spent a few days severely overcrowded in the one-bedroom flat of the sponsor before presenting as homeless at the Hamish Allan centre and being rehoused.

29 The Hamish Allan centre is part of Glasgow City Council homeless services and includes a dedicated Asylum and Refugee Services unit.

In three cases (6%), all involving larger families, a temporary furnished flat (TFF) was set up for the family pre-arrival and the new arrivals were able to travel straight from the airport to join the sponsor in this accommodation. This was facilitated through the establishment of a housing referral protocol between Scottish Refugee Council and Glasgow City Council for those arriving through family reunion.

The British Red Cross Family Reunion Travel Assistance programme provides a unique source of advance information on arrival dates for sponsors who have used the service. This has the potential to enable planning and early intervention on housing for these families. Scottish Refugee Council advisors informed Glasgow City Council homeless services of family arrivals in cases where the project had advance information about families' flights from the British Red Cross. This usually enabled a temporary flat to be held for families on the day, so long waiting times were generally avoided. Out of the fourteen families who presented homeless on the day of arrival or within days, the travel details of six (43%) were not known to the project in advance either because they were referrals from external agencies outside the partnership or because their flights were not arranged through the Red Cross.

The remaining 28% of new arrivals moved into overcrowded temporary accommodation (16%) or overcrowded settled accommodation (12%). Several of these families made subsequent homeless applications over the following days and weeks.

Families where the sponsor was already in settled accommodation have faced more difficulties moving to large enough accommodation than those where the sponsor was still in temporary accommodation. Sponsors who were still in temporary accommodation were already linked to a homeless caseworker through the Asylum and Refugee services of Glasgow City Council Homelessness services. This team was more familiar with refugee housing pathways than other homelessness service teams. Those in settled accommodation had to present as homeless to community casework teams who were less aware of the family reunion process. In some cases they refused initially to make homeless assessments, instead telling families to go to their housing associations to request rehousing.

A refugee sponsor who had tried hard to get accommodation set up for this family before they arrived had faced problems because he was already in settled accommodation. In an interview just before his family's arrival, he described how he was feeling:

I'm frustrated about the accommodation, because when my family come and stay with me in the studio flat it will be a bad first impression, something psychological. My wife will be shocked. In our country we never stay together four people in one room... I didn't think this would happen. I wanted to relax, enjoy and celebrate with them.

(Father, Sudan)

This quote highlights why it is important to get housing in place on arrival so that family relations are not put under additional pressure. Suitable accommodation is essential for families who are starting to re-build family life and create a new home together.

In another case where the sponsor was already in settled accommodation, a family had to make a double payment of rent when they presented as homeless and moved from the husband's overcrowded settled accommodation into a temporary flat. This was because the sponsor had not informed the housing association a month in advance that he intended to move out. His Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisor had signposted him to the Legal Services Agency and had applied for a discretionary housing payment, but in this case he did not receive this. The sponsor was unable to pay the amount in full and an arrangement was set up to have money taken off his benefits each month. This resulted in additional financial pressures on the family. The father stated simply: “*No one can pay for two houses.*” This highlights that problems can occur even with support. It highlights the need for more joined up planning within housing services to ensure that families can make fully informed decisions when the sponsor is already in settled accommodation, and to ensure that families are not faced with the dilemma of either living in acutely overcrowded situations for a month or penalised by paying double rent.

Some families who were in settled housing had experienced problems setting up the accommodation with suitable furniture for their family. Several new arrivals had to sleep on the floor initially. Sponsors had found it distressing welcoming families to accommodation that they had not been able to furnish adequately.



Overcrowding

Overall, 28% of families experienced overcrowding after being reunited. One family moved after 12 days but the majority remained in overcrowded accommodation for much longer. 26% of families lived in overcrowded accommodation for over a month, and some remained overcrowded for more than eight months whilst seeking other accommodation.

Some experienced periods of acute overcrowding that would clearly fall within the definition of statutory overcrowding. In Scotland the legislation on overcrowding falls within the provisions of Part VII (sections 135 to 137) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Accommodation is regarded as being overcrowded if it fails either the 'room standard' and/or the 'space standard'. The room standard is contravened if two people of opposite sex who are not married, living together or in a civil partnership, and who are not under the age of 10, have to share a room. This refers to rooms normally used in the locality as bedrooms or living rooms.³⁰

In other cases there have not been enough details about the living space to determine statutory overcrowding. Nevertheless, the details available indicate a pressure on space that has the potential to put pressure on relationships, for example newly arriving teenage children having to share rooms with parents they have not lived with for several years.

The reasons for overcrowding differed from family to family, as did the length of time spent in overcrowding and the level of choice families had about their housing situation. Of those families experiencing overcrowding, 57% had sponsors living in temporary accommodation at the time of arrival and 43% in settled accommodation.

In two cases where families have reported being overcrowded, their housing situation would not be classed as statutory overcrowding as the family were technically able to make long-term use of a living room as an extra sleeping space. In practice, how the two families managed this situation and the impact this had on family life differed considerably. One family had actively chosen to stay in a flat because the sponsor had established strong connections in the area, and had chosen to use the living room as a sleeping space for one son.

30 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1987/26/part/vii/crossheading/definition-of-overcrowding

In the other case, a mother in settled accommodation had struggled for months to rehouse her family of five, including her teenage daughter and three sons. Her house was not technically overcrowded because it had three bedrooms and a living room, however one bedroom was unusable because of damp and her teenage daughter shared with two of her younger brothers. They had chosen not to use the living room, which was a through room to the kitchen, as a sleeping space. This mother described the difficulties of overcrowding, particularly for her teenage daughter:

So until now I'm waiting. It's too hard, too hard. Because now you know [my daughter] is now 18, and she's sharing with two brothers so it's tight. Yes, she needs to have her own room, needs to have her own privacy... Since they came in November, I apply different housing. Still now I'm waiting.
(Mother, Gambia)

Families experiences of overcrowding and the extent to which it creates pressures on family relations is affected by the size of the accommodation as well as by the family composition and the dynamics of relationships within the family.

In cases where there has been statutory overcrowding and the council had a duty to rehouse the family, some families have chosen to remain overcrowded. Four large families were acutely overcrowded sharing a one-bedroom flat for more than a month before they moved to large enough accommodation. One family of five chose to remain overcrowded rather than move into bed and breakfast accommodation. One family of six turned down the offer of temporary accommodation that was far out of the city. Another family of five with three small children had been advised by their housing officer to stay in the husband's one-bedroom temporary flat and apply from there rather than present to the Hamish Allan centre. The fourth case involved a teenage daughter coming to join a family who were already living in an overcrowded situation. It is unclear what housing options this family had sought or been given.

Some families interviewed stated that, whilst they did not mind staying in a one bedroom flat in the days immediately following reunion because they were so happy to see each other, it later became more difficult. A teenage girl from a large family stated:

At first we were in one room altogether. But we were very happy because we were all together... After a week of living together, oh my God!
(Young woman, Kuwait)

During the focus group with young people, two teenage brothers described how living in a one bedroom flat was “OK” at the beginning but soon became hard:

First days we were happy, but then it was a bit hard. Then it was a bit too much.
(Young man, Syria)

Discussions about overcrowding brought out differences between family members. A Syrian mother, who had been separated from her children for a year stated that she did not mind the overcrowding experience as she was so glad to be with her children again. However, her husband had found it much more difficult and had struggled with having so little personal space.

In other cases families have had to wait longer than expected for promised settled accommodation through housing nominations to be ready. The mother of a new-born baby and teenage daughter described the difficulties of living in a studio flat for almost 8 months:

I think if it was me and [my daughter] only it was probably fine. But it was him as well, all this stuff, it was just like in the corner. I couldn't even take out the cot bed for him... Everything was just in piles and piles and we just couldn't do anything.
(Mother, Zimbabwe)

For several families these experiences of overcrowding have been stressful and have hindered feeling settled in Glasgow.

Available details of families who experienced living in overcrowded situations are given in the two tables below for those with the sponsor in temporary accommodation on arrival and in settled accommodation on arrival. Those still in overcrowded situations in May 2015 and the length of time they had been overcrowded until this date are highlighted in italics:³¹

FAMILY	SIZE OF ACCOMMODATION	NO. OF DAYS OR MONTHS	NOTES
5 people: mother, father and three children under 10	1 bedroom	47 days	Mother and three small children advised by Housing Officer to stay in husband's one-bedroom TFF and apply for houses from there rather than present as homeless.
5 people: mother, father, one child under 10, one son and one daughter over 10	2 bedroom	79 days	Family chose to stay in husband's TFF and apply for houses from there rather than present as homeless.
5 people: mother, one daughter and one son over 10, and two younger brothers	2 bedroom	96 days	Teenage daughter and teenage son joining mother and two other brothers. Chose to stay where they were. Were later moved.
6 people: mother, father, three sons and one daughter over 10	1 bedroom	40 days	Family chose to stay in one-bedroom flat rather than move to TFF far out of town.
3 people: mother, one daughter over 10 and one baby	Studio flat	230 days	Mother was in hospital and unable to move into suitable TFF when offered. Family then had to wait for longer than expected to move after they had accepted a nomination.
2 people: mother and one son over 10	1 bedroom	12 days	Teenage son joined mother in unsuitable temporary accommodation.
3 people: father, mother and adult daughter	1 bedroom	6 months running	Offer of a suitable house was withdrawn because of arrears created by a bureaucratic error. Family still searching for suitable housing.
9 people: mother, father, four sons and three daughters over 10	3 bedroom	8.5 months running	Family spent 4 days in one-bedroom flat. Moved to three-bedroom TFF remaining overcrowded but choosing to live together rather than separate across two flats.

FIGURE 4 OVERCROWDING WHEN SPONSOR IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ON ARRIVAL

31 Note: the age and sex of children who were already in the country with the refugee sponsor were not always known to the project.

FAMILY	SIZE OF ACCOMMODATION	NO. OF DAYS OR MONTHS	NOTES
5 people: mother, father, two daughters under 10, one son over 10	1 bedroom	34 days	Turned down bed & breakfast accommodation and chose to wait until large enough TFF became available.
3 people: father, two sons over 10	1 bedroom	Approx. 70 days	Two teenage sons joining father.
5 people: mother, two sons under 10, one son over 10, one daughter over 10	3 bedroom (1 unusable)	7 months running	Mother has been applying for new house since three additional children arrived. Third bedroom unusable because of severe damp.
5 people: father, mother, one daughter over 10, one primary school-aged child and new baby	1 bedroom	3 months running	One additional teenager to already overcrowded family home.
4 people: mother, two sons under 10, one daughter over 10	1 bedroom	3 months running	Teenage daughter and two younger brothers joining mother already living with one younger child.
4 people: mother, father, son over 10 and one daughter over 10	2 bedroom	8 months running	Mother and two teenage children joining father chose to stay in flat rather than move because they had established strong connections in the local area.

FIGURE 5 OVERCROWDING WHEN SPONSOR IN SETTLED ACCOMMODATION ON ARRIVAL

As of May 2015, eight families had moved and six remained in overcrowded situations. Of those still overcrowded, one is the family described above who had chosen to remain in the area and make use of their living room. Another is a large family who had chosen to stay overcrowded in one flat rather than separate across two flats whilst they wait to find large enough settled accommodation.

The other four families had been waiting for between three and seven months to find large enough accommodation. Three of these families were cases involving teenage children joining parents who were already in settled accommodation. The data indicates again that those families where the sponsor has been living in settled accommodation have faced more problems moving to a larger flat than those in temporary accommodation

Progression to settled accommodation

Finding settled accommodation is a key indicator of integration. Settled accommodation provides the opportunity for families to build more secure and stable links to a local area, knowing that they will not have to move again. This is very important for families who are trying to rebuild a sense of home. One mother who had had a long wait to move into a permanent home expressed how happy she was to have eventually moved:

This is it. That's me and my family here. And we're going to stay here until... I don't know. This is our home... We have a nice house, so we try to keep it well and nice and clean and all. So that's it. I'm not going to have second thoughts that I'm going to move out of here, no, not now.
(Mother, Zimbabwe)

By the end of May 2015, the total proportion of families in suitable settled accommodation was 62%. Twelve families who were in temporary accommodation and four families in overcrowded settled accommodation were still trying to move. The largest families have found it particularly difficult to move on from temporary accommodation because of the lack of available large settled accommodation. Three families had left Scotland.

ACCOMMODATION AT END OF PROJECT	PERCENTAGE
Settled accommodation (not overcrowded)	62%
Temporary accommodation	24%
Overcrowded settled accommodation	8%
Moved to another city	6%

FIGURE 6 ACCOMMODATION AT THE END OF THE PROJECT

For the families who had moved into settled accommodation over the course of the project it had taken on average 100 days to move into settled accommodation (data available for 15 families).

Other housing issues

In interviews, families highlighted several other issues related to housing. Some people mentioned that their housing situation was different to their expectations, particularly those who were living in overcrowded spaces. One woman from Pakistan who was living in a particularly cramped space described how she was eager to go outside to the local park at any opportunity, or alternatively encourage her husband to go out.

For some, housing had exacerbated existing health and well-being issues. In the most serious case a woman with a history of mental illness, experienced a serious deterioration in her condition immediately after arrival, which was attributed in part to moving into a high flat. Others mentioned problems of claustrophobia and having difficulties living in high-rise flats because of a fear of heights. In a few cases accommodation had triggered traumatic memories.

Three families mentioned neighbours making complaints about noise. Two families had been able to handle these. However, in one case neighbours had consistently harassed a refugee mother and her daughters with complaints about the noise of her children playing, of her making telephone calls and even of the children snoring. Their complaints had escalated to a mediation process. The process had left this woman feeling powerless and frightened to let her children make any noise in the flat:

I'm living here as a slave. We cannot make a noise... Here at any time of the day they will come and say we are making too much noise.

The interpreter recounted this woman's experience of the mediation process:

It was very difficult for her and upsetting, but she didn't know what to do. She felt she had to agree. She also has to let the neighbours know if visitors are coming to stay...

This woman had been asked for details of her family's daily routine during the mediation process and she felt uncomfortable that she had to share these personal things.



Those we interviewed who had moved into settled accommodation or were in large enough temporary flats generally reported feeling safe and secure in their current accommodation. Only one mother was not happy with the area and wanted to move with her children to another place.

Most were satisfied with the quality of the housing, although three were not. Two noted repairs that had taken time to address including a fallen ceiling in a bathroom and a plumbing issue that had prevented them from using the washing machine. Another family had a serious problem with damp in their home which had made one room unusable.

It is significant to note that half of the families have moved at least once within the first few months of arriving to either further temporary accommodation or to settled accommodation. Nine families (18%) moved twice or more. Many aspects of integration are dependent on housing including enrolment in schools, registration with GP practices and the development of local social connections. When families have to move home, all these local connections get disrupted. After months or sometimes years of unsettled family life finding a place from which they do not have to move on is psychologically as well as practically an important basis for integration.

Housing recommendations

- > Housing providers should work with refugee sponsors to ensure suitable temporary or settled accommodation is ready for the families' arrival.
- > Good practice established through the housing protocol developed by Scottish Refugee Council with Glasgow City Council Asylum and Refugee Services should be maintained and mainstreamed throughout housing services in Glasgow. This should be extended to ensure coordination with the Red Cross Travel Assistance service on family arrival information.
- > The good practice developed on housing pathways for reuniting families should be disseminated and Local Authorities and other Registered Social Landlords across the UK should consider adopting similar housing protocols.
- > The British Red Cross and Scottish Refugee Council should work with the wider voluntary sector to develop a protocol and package to provide furniture for newly housed families to avoid family members sleeping on the floor.

COMPARISON WITH FAMILIES IN WEST YORKSHIRE: HOUSING

Three out of the five reunited families we spoke to in West Yorkshire had experienced significant problems with housing. These included: moving multiple times, poor quality housing, health and safety risks and family members being separated due to lack of space.

Syrian family 1 (Sponsor, wife and 3 children): Upon arrival the family went to Leeds City Council to present as homeless. The council stated that they had no accommodation available, so the sponsor went to book his family into a hotel. Later that day the council informed him that they had found accommodation which the family could stay in for two nights. After two days no other accommodation was provided so they stayed a further two nights until the property owner asked them to leave. Not knowing what to do, the sponsor contacted his old housing manager who made a temporary arrangement for his wife and children for one night, whilst the sponsor stayed in his old accommodation. The following day the council provided the family with a temporary house. When the family moved in the house was rat-infested, had no furniture or gas and there was dampness and drafts throughout. After eight months the council deemed the house unsafe to live in. They contacted the landlord who has since dealt with some of the issues. The wife struggles in the house as it has three floors and she suffers from bad arthritis. The family also feel unsafe as someone was killed on their street recently. The sponsor goes to the council regularly in a bid to secure more suitable and permanent accommodation.

Sudanese family 1 (Sponsor, wife and 3 children): The family arrived in the UK in the autumn of 2014. They had moved six times in the space of five months within the Bradford area. They reported that they had stayed between two days and four months in each place and had moved due to overcrowding, being victims of racism and being asked to leave by landlords. Their current property was unfurnished, dirty and had no gas when they moved in. They have struggled to obtain beds to sleep on and other essential furniture.

Sudanese family 2 (Sponsor, wife and baby): The sponsor tried to arrange suitable accommodation before his wife arrived, because he was living in a shared flat and did not want his wife to have to stay there. He was able to make an informal arrangement with a friend to swap to his one-bedroom accommodation so that they would have their own space. After her arrival, his wife became pregnant. A health visitor who visited some months later deemed the flat unsafe to live in due to a high number of flies and a lack of heating. The couple have since applied for a permanent house in Wakefield and have moved up from priority C to B on the housing list.

5.2 Integration experiences | Welfare benefits, destitution and employment

Key findings

Welfare benefits

- > Average processing time for Jobseeker's Allowance was 34 days, for Employment and Support Allowance was 33 days and for Pension Credit was almost double at 61 days.
- > Average processing time for Child Benefit was 30 days and for Child Tax Credit was 67 days.

Destitution

- > Families are at high risk of destitution immediately after being reunited because of the processing time for benefits applications.
- > 72% of families were granted crisis grants from the Scottish Welfare Fund.
- > Financial difficulties place strain on families at a critical time when relationships are being re-established.

Employment

- > Only two new arrivals who were both male spouses found employment over the course of the project.

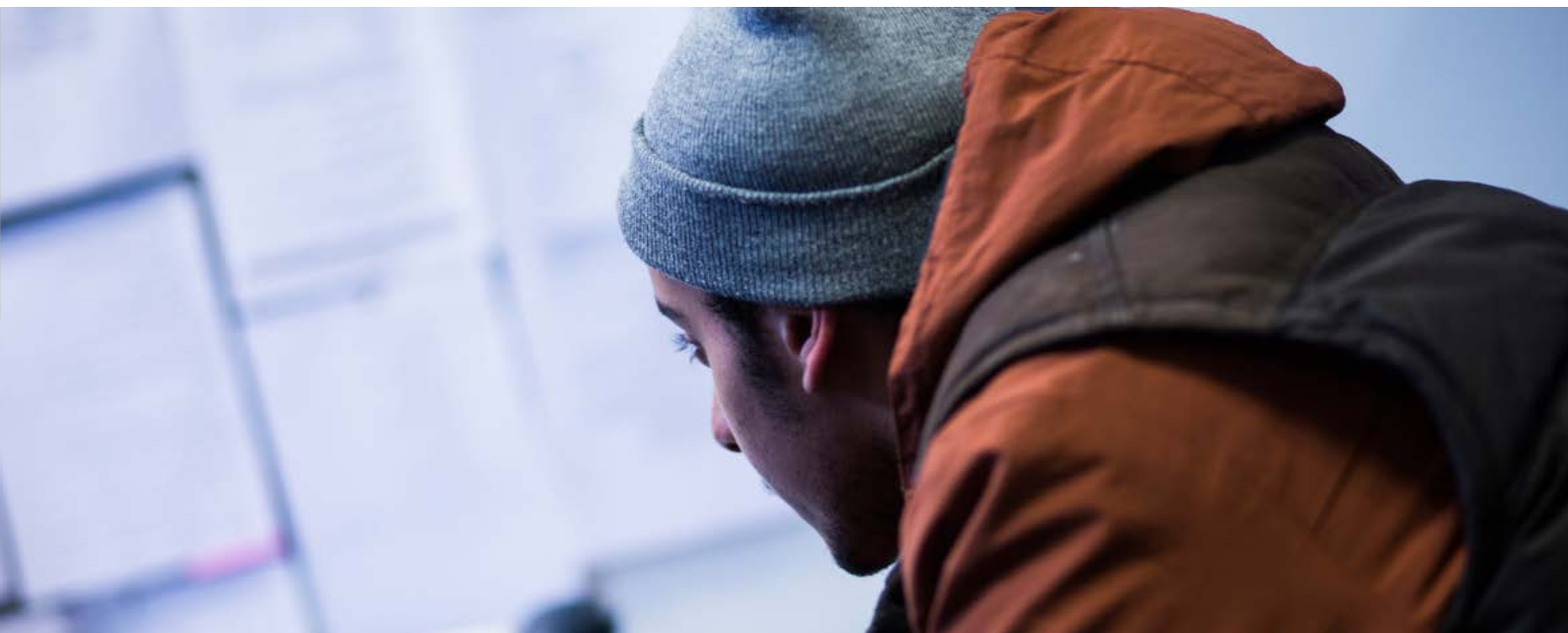
Financial pressures can significantly affect a family's ability to settle and integrate in the UK. Finances are often stretched both during and following the reunion process. The expenses of the sponsor's journey to the UK are often considerable. A study on the poverty experiences of refugees in Scotland found that many refugees send money back to support family members overseas (Lindsay, Gillespie and Dobbie, 2010). In addition the costs involved in the family reunion application process itself add to the financial burden (British Red Cross, 2011, 2013).

Once reunited, timescales for receiving benefits can further exacerbate families' financial difficulties and systematically put families at high risk of destitution.³²

This section outlines key integration indicators related to access to welfare support, rates of destitution and progression to employment. It provides insight into the processing times for benefits. It highlights how lengthy processing times result in a high risk of destitution immediately after arrival, with this risk being more acute for families with higher numbers of new arrivals.

The employment section details the type of employment family members have been able to secure in Glasgow since arriving, the barriers they have experienced and the psychological impact of employment challenges.

³² The British Red Cross describes someone who is destitute as: " a person who is not accessing public funds, is living in extreme poverty and is unable to meet basic needs, e.g. income, food, shelter, healthcare, and who is forced to rely on irregular support from family, friends, charities or illegal working to survive" (BRC 2010: 7).



5.2.1 Welfare benefits

It is important to highlight that all families accessing the service have been offered support in navigating access to benefits. Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers guided families to submit applications as soon as possible after arrival and actively followed up delays. Even so family members had to wait on average at least a month to receive benefits. Those arriving through family reunion in West Yorkshire who did not have access to the integration service experienced even longer delays.

Main adult welfare benefits

The majority of family members have arrived on family reunion visas, which gives the family members full access to welfare benefits. On arrival 68% of newly arrived family members applied for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA); 12% for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and 8% for Pension Credit.

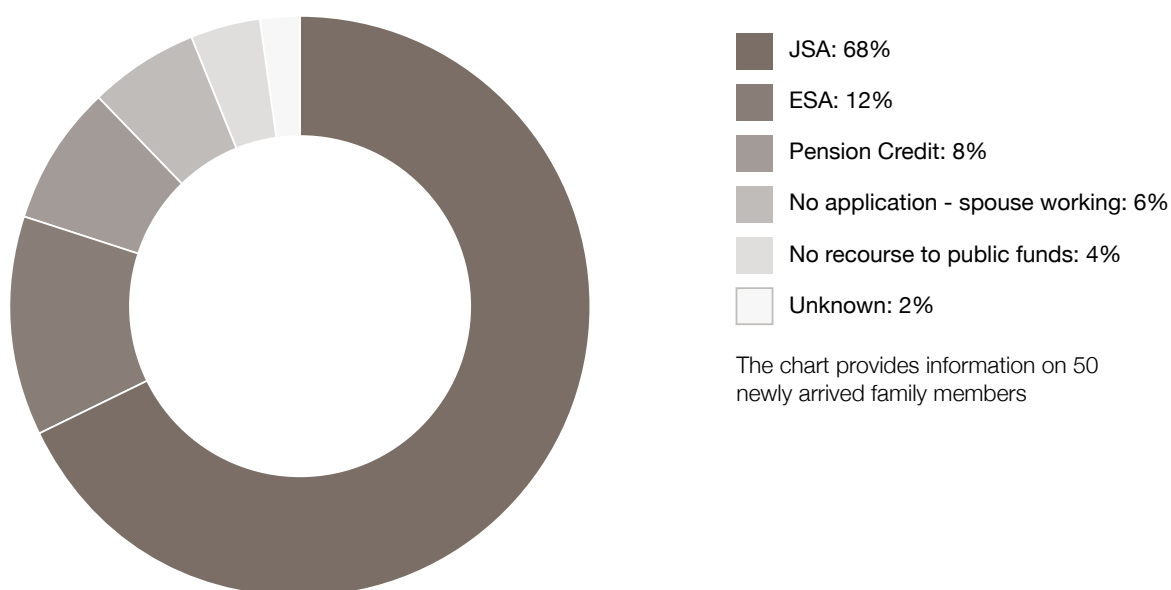


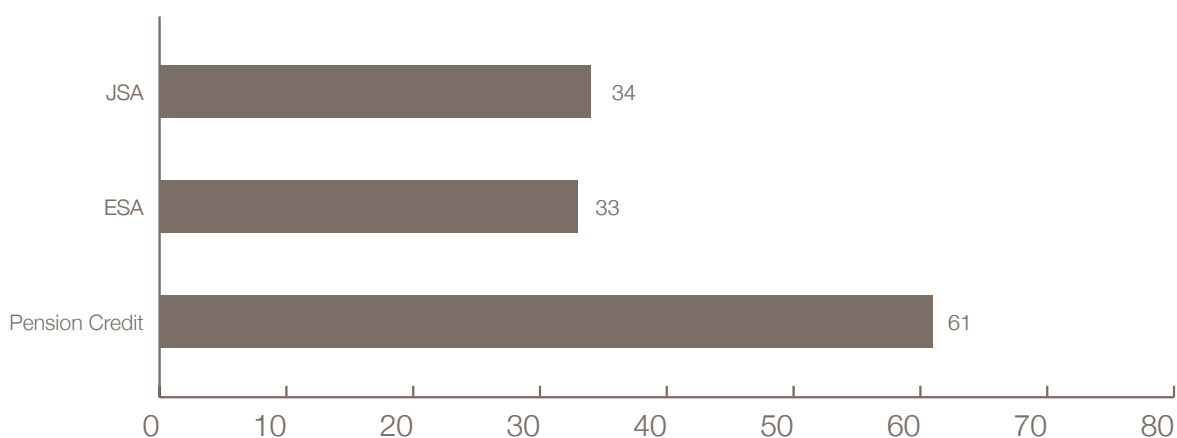
FIGURE 7 BENEFIT CLAIMS ON ARRIVAL



Three people were not eligible for benefits due to having a sponsor in work. Two were not eligible as they had no recourse to public funds having been granted a discretionary visa outside of the rules. These were dependent adults who did not meet the criteria for the standard family reunion visa.

Available figures reveal an average processing time of almost five weeks for JSA and ESA payments and almost nine weeks for Pension Credit. The average number of days for JSA payments to start was 34 days and for ESA was 33 days.³³ The shortest time to receive JSA was 7 days, and the longest was 73 days. The shortest time to receive ESA was 4 days, and the longest was 92 days. In the shortest cases for both JSA and ESA benefits had started before the National Insurance Number (NINo) was received.³⁴ In the longest case to receive JSA the family had moved to another city as the benefits were being processed. In the longest case to receive ESA the application had been delayed because the applicant was not able to sign forms for a NINo so other paperwork had to be completed for a relative to sign on his behalf.

Pension Credit took significantly longer to start, on average 61 days, but there was less variation with a range of 55 and 69 days.



Data on processing times was available for 31 people for JSA, 5 for ESA and 3 for Pension Credit.

FIGURE 8 AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS FOR BENEFITS TO START

³³ For new refugees in Scotland accessing the Holistic Integration Service the average time from claim to payment was slightly lower at 28 days for JSA and 30 days for ESA (Strang et al., 2015).

³⁴ DWP guidance specifies that a NINo is not required for benefits to be processed and has advised that newly granted people should not delay in making a claim to benefit if [they] do not have a NINo". (DWP Guidance sent to new refugees re-published in British Red Cross 2014: Appendix D, p 62.)

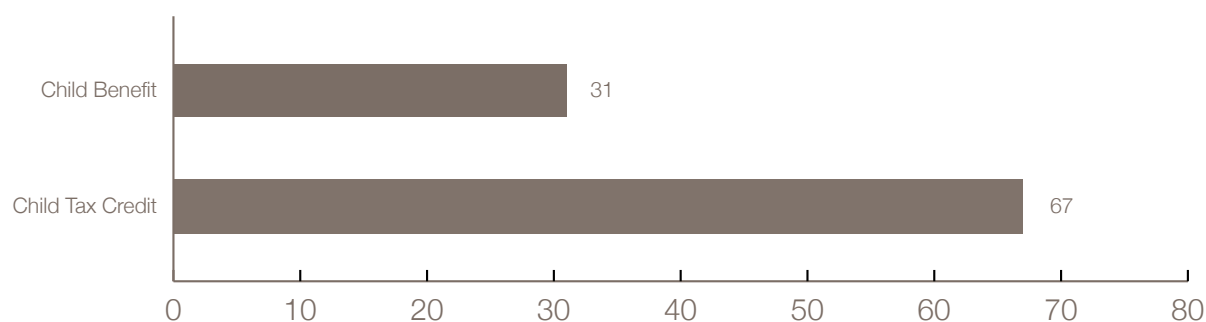
Where the new arrival was a spouse, application for a joint benefits claim was made. Because joint claims are paid into the main recipient's bank account, the new arrivals become financially dependent on the sponsor for accessing their allowance, unless they set up a joint bank account. As the majority of arriving spouses were women, there is an important gender dimension to highlight here. It is important to recognise that access to finances for the arriving spouse will become dependent on, or mediated through, the sponsor if joint claims go directly into the sponsor's bank account. This financial dependency has potential implications for their integration which can be exacerbated by other kinds of dependencies which will be discussed in relation to other integration domains.

Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit

29 families had children and were eligible for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. On average it took 30 days for families to receive Child Benefit.³⁵ The shortest time to start receiving Child Benefit was 15 days, and the longest was 70 days.

The average number of days to receive Child Tax Credit was 67 days. Child Tax Credit took considerably longer to process than Child Benefit. The shortest time to start receiving Child Tax Credit was 24 days, and the longest was 139 days.

These figures indicate the high risk of financial strain on families with children who have to wait on average more than two months for their full support entitlement to begin.



Data on Child Benefits applications was available for 23 families, and on Child Tax Credit applications for 20 families.

FIGURE 9 AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS FOR CHILD BENEFITS TO START

Several of the longest delays in receiving benefits were experienced by the same family. The parents applied for Pension Credit and the longer processing time for these had a knock on effect on both Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. Further delays were caused by lost paperwork at the processing centre, which meant benefits started for only some of the children initially.

Families who participated in the focus groups stressed the importance of having the correct information and knowledge regarding the benefits system and stated that without the support of the project setting up benefits would have been very difficult.

³⁵ For new refugees in Scotland accessing the Holistic Integration Service the average time from claim to payment was higher at 46 days for Child Benefit and 77 days for Child Tax Credit (Strang et al., 2015).

COMPARISON WITH FAMILIES IN WEST YORKSHIRE: BENEFITS

Families in West Yorkshire had to wait between two and four months for their main benefits to start. This was considerably longer than the average of one month for people supported through the project in Scotland. One person described how they had been made to apply three times, and had finally been sent to larger processing centre in a neighbouring city.

Most families had to wait for between one and two and a half months for Child Benefit and for between two to three months for Child Tax Credit to begin. These times were more comparable with waiting times for families in Scotland, where it took on average one month for Child Benefit and just over two months for Child Tax Credit to begin. For one family child benefits took only two weeks. In this case the family spoke English and were able to set up the benefits with relative ease by themselves. For families with limited English this process was much more difficult. One family we interviewed, but were not able to contact to follow up exact dates, reported having to wait five months to start receiving both Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

In the absence of an integration service these families were vulnerable to poverty and destitution. During the time families were waiting for benefits to begin, they received minimal support. Three families received food vouchers from the British Red Cross, whilst one more received a loan from a community centre.

In one instance a refugee sponsor from Syria decided to declare himself self-employed following the arrival of his family with the intention of setting up his own business. As a result his family were not entitled to benefits and free school meals for his children. He struggled financially to provide for his family and later decided to reapply for benefits. He was seeking information about whether he could reclaim his benefit entitlements. Earlier advice could have helped to prevent this situation.

5.2.2 Destitution

Destitution support

Crisis grants are provided by the Scottish Welfare Fund, a fund set up by the Scottish Government “to provide a safety net when someone experiences a disaster or emergency situation... and there is an immediate threat to health and safety”.³⁶

Data on crisis grant applications indicates that 76% of families had made applications, and 72% had received a crisis grant. 26% of families received more than one grant because of extended delays or repeated problems in processing benefits payments.

There was an improvement in the processing of crisis grant claims after Scottish Refugee Council provided explanation of the issues facing reuniting families and advocated for the acceptance of claims where a NINo had not yet been processed.

Twelve families (24%) did not apply for a crisis grant; however the families’ finances were still stretched enough to require a food bank referral in seven cases. This indicates that 90% of families overall required emergency support and highlights the levels of poverty and destitution families are arriving into.

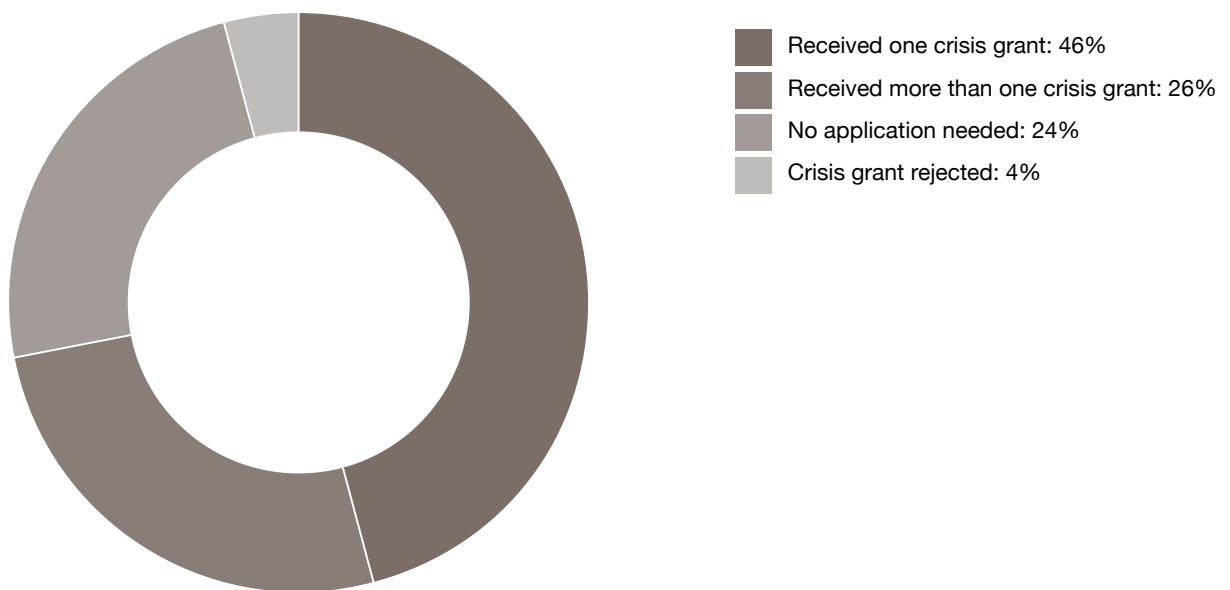


FIGURE 10 CRISIS GRANT APPLICATIONS PER FAMILY

Destitution grants from charities such as the Refugee Survival Trust were made for families in some instances, for example whilst appealing the rejection of a crisis grant application or when the size of the family meant they did not have enough resources to manage even for a short period.

Project staff regularly made referrals for families to food banks as well as to services providing furniture and clothing. In total, Red Cross caseworkers made referrals for 32 families to food banks, in some cases multiple times for the same family. In addition every family member received clothing vouchers and an emergency provisions pack on arrival.³⁷ These figures indicate a systemic problem. The processing time for benefits applications leads to periods of destitution immediately after families are reunited. This is an issue that is recognised in provision for refugee families arriving through resettlement programmes when families are given financial support on arrival to cover the period up until when benefits are expected to start.

³⁷ In total more than 153 destitution interventions were made for families by Red Cross caseworkers over the course of the project.

Financial difficulties place extra stress on family relations at a time when people are re-establishing relationships and trying to settle into life in the UK. Destitution experiences impact on family relations causing anxiety and distress, for example where parents are unable to provide essentials for their children, or where there is a strong expectation within couples about whose role it is to earn for the family. This disruption of roles affects individuals within the family and puts pressure on family dynamics.

In one family we interviewed the children had started school without uniforms and had been picked on by other children in class because of this. They were upset and had told their parents they had felt ashamed. There had been delays in processing a clothing grant and so the parents chose to buy uniforms for their five children themselves. As a result they did not have enough money to feed themselves and their children that week and had to be referred again to a food bank. This series of events had been distressing for the whole family. It illustrates the dilemmas parents face when they cannot afford to meet their children’s essential needs, and the impact this has on the children’s integration experiences.

During a focus group, women stated that it would have been “impossible” for them to find help without the assistance of the project because they simply did not know that support existed and did not have language skills on arrival to ask for help.

5.2.3 Employment

Pathways to employability often have several steps for refugee families including language learning, gaining qualifications or retraining. Gaining UK work experience is also often a key barrier and some sponsors had taken up volunteering to help gain experience. All families were invited to a community conference organised by the Scottish Refugee Council that explored volunteering opportunities and options.

Only two new arrivals (4%) had found employment within the period of the project. One man had found a job in a petrol station and another had found work as a pastry chef a few months after arrival. The low numbers of new arrivals in employment is unsurprising given the numerous barriers to accessing employment.

Four refugee sponsors (8%) were in employment at the time their family arrived and a further six (12%) have been in employment for some period since their family’s arrival.³⁸ Their jobs have generally been low-skilled and insecure, and some have only been part-time. One sponsor worked in a car wash, one as a security guard, two in call centres, one as a part-time janitor, one as an administrator, one in a warehouse and three in kitchens at restaurants or care homes. One person in low wage employment found that, despite having a job, his income was not enough to manage the household bills and provide for his family. He was compelled to give up his job after a few months because of this.

It is important to note that the majority of newly arriving spouses were female and several have come from families where men have often taken the main responsibility for providing the family’s income. Nevertheless, several women involved in the projects group work programme expressed the desire to find a job.

³⁸ Data available from the Holistic Integration Service year two report highlighted that only 7% of new refugees gained employment since the start of the service in May 2013, and half of these worked in catering (34%) or cleaning (16%) (Strang et al., 2015).



Barriers to employment

The main barriers to employment mentioned by refugee families were language, qualifications not being recognised and a lack of work experience in the UK. Many people had low levels of English on arrival. One person was confused about how she could find a job if she did not speak English. She explained what happened at her first appointment to fill out benefits forms:

...there was a paper to sign and he said I needed to have a job as soon as possible. And I laughed because I can't speak English – how can I find a job?
(Young woman, Kuwait)

She managed to access ESOL classes quickly which was the key first step for her towards employability.

People who spoke some English on arrival often felt that they needed to be at a higher level in order to feel confident and comfortable at work. A lack of English for highly qualified and skilled individuals meant that were unable to start rebuilding their careers. For the vast majority of new arrivals, learning English took priority as the first step to being in a position to find a job.

Many people who had professional jobs in their home countries have struggled to access similar work because previous qualifications and experience have not been recognised. To get back into similar employment usually requires re-training, which involves time and expenses. People interviewed spoke of their frustration that despite having relevant

qualifications and experience they were expected to completely re-train:

Three days ago I went to Caledonian University. I gave them my certificate. I know they will not take it and will ask me to do another HNC course first.
(Father, Sudan)

Especially for young people in their late teens and early twenties who were just finishing their qualifications and about to start careers when they left their home countries the sense of frustration was acute. One young woman from Pakistan explained the feeling of having lost time because the experiences her family had been through had severely disrupted her education. Another young man from Iraq spoke of the frustration of having to start again from zero. He had completed a course in engineering and had achieved very high grades before they had fled. He realised he would not only have to re-qualify but would first have to study English.

Another barrier for people in the search for employment was a lack of work experience in the UK. In total seven referrals were made to the Bridges Programme which offers courses for employability and work placements to help people gain critical experience and references. Three of these referrals were for young people aged 16-18. In addition seven referrals were made for young people to Skills Development Scotland to get support with careers and educational advice.

Impacts of being out of work

It was common for those who had previously been employed to encounter a loss of work status upon arrival in the UK. The professions of sponsors and their spouses in their countries included lawyers, teachers, businessmen and academics. Now many are unemployed or are working in low-skilled jobs. One man explained:

I was a Radiography Technician – using x-rays, ultrasound, MRI... If I try to apply to get a job in my field it is not easy. It's not easy... To be honest it is very difficult. It's the main challenge for me right now. So what I am doing now is to improve my language... Everyone has to start again from the beginning.
(Father, Sudan)

As well as financial consequences, the loss of work status and role within the family can have emotional and psychological impacts which effect individuals as well as families. The frustration at not being able to find work or not being able to work at the level you are trained for, along with the other challenges people face in trying to rebuild their careers can lead to mental health problems. The same man spoke about the risks of this and the strength needed to keep trying:

Sometimes when I'm sitting alone now in the UK, it's difficult to find a job, it's difficult to study, I feel the future is gloomy. And then you need to encourage yourself. It's very difficult; it's not easy. To be successful person here in the UK, have to work very hard. If you step back you can lose your life to drink or drugs. So you have to be very strong.
(Male, sponsor, Sudan)

Being in a working environment allows people to build contacts, to learn English and to build on their skills and expertise. People who struggle to find employment in the UK miss these other integration benefits that a work environment offers.

COMPARISON WITH FAMILIES IN WEST YORKSHIRE: EMPLOYMENT

Families in West Yorkshire experienced similar barriers to families in Scotland when trying to enter employment in the UK. They mentioned language barriers, qualifications not being recognised and the cost and time involved in having to re-train as key issues.

Most of the families have experienced a loss of work status in the UK. One sponsor had been a legal advisor in Syria, whilst his wife was an English teacher at a university. In order to work in the UK they both need to re-train but the cost and requirements needed make this extremely difficult. The wife explained the psychological impact:

And now we are under zero. Not financially just, because it's like somebody in high school when you want to know what you are going to do. Your position and your job and your confidence it just disappeared. That's hard. For me it's easier because I can find a way to teach here. But for my husband it's really difficult because there is no way to be a lawyer here unless you study again. It's so difficult. Because he spent 10 years as a lawyer... not only, but he had his private office which we lost as well. It's hard, it's really hard.

Recommendations

Benefits

- > New arrivals should be enabled to complete benefits applications as soon as possible after arrival.
- > Reunited families should be provided with information on options for benefits delivery, including the possibility to set up a joint bank account or for families to arrange for child-related benefits and main benefits to be paid into different parent's bank accounts.
- > Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs should continue a strategic learning relationship regarding welfare and employability pathways for refugees and family members of refugees arriving through family reunion.
- > Department for Work and Pensions should work with new arrivals to ensure understanding of the jobseeker's claimant commitment and conditionality including in cases where joint claims are made.
- > Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs should each establish a 'single point of contact' with an understanding of the family reunion journey and refugee family member's rights, to enable smoother processing of all benefits claims and change of circumstance adjustments.

Preventing destitution

- > In the absence of UK-level provision to prevent destitution, the Scottish Government should enable Local Authorities to issue an automatic grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund to those arriving through family reunion to cover expenses until mainstream benefits start. This would be in line with provision for refugee families arriving through resettlement programmes.
- > Recognising that the majority of families arrive into situations of poverty, agencies should provide financial advice to enable understanding of UK systems and enhance financial literacy.

Employment

- > Employability agencies should work with adult family members to develop understanding of employment options and potential pathways that:
 - > take into consideration an individual's levels of English literacy and fluency, recognising that the majority have low levels on arrival and will often have to prioritise language as the first step;
 - > fully explore past experience and transferable skills, whilst taking into account that many new arrivals are women who may not always have had opportunities for employment in their home country;
 - > discuss realistic possibilities and timescales for accreditation or re-training for those with specific skills or professions, recognising that there are often considerable barriers;
 - > provide information about volunteering options and the potential benefits of developing UK experience, on the job language skills and work-related social connections.

5.3 Integration experiences | Health

Key findings

- > 68% of families were able to register with the GP without support and 32% required support.
- > New arrivals with immediate health issues or long-term support needs faced delays in accessing appropriate services.
- > 30% required additional health advocacy or referrals to other services for family members.
- > Families’ experiences during separation, migration and reunification present high risk factors for poor mental health and psychological well-being.

Without adequate health, progression on other integration pathways can be severely jeopardised or in some cases cannot even begin. The majority of new arrivals did not report immediate health issues, but in some cases people arrived with recent injuries or other health concerns because of the situations they were fleeing. In a small number of cases existing physical or mental health conditions presented a serious barrier to integration for the individuals concerned and also their families. In some cases long-term conditions were exacerbated by the new environment and in others new conditions developed after arrival.

This section explores families’ experiences of accessing health services and the barriers they have encountered. It outlines data on GP registrations, information from interviews about access to interpreters and knowledge of the health system. It also provides insight into the type of health referrals and advocacy work which has been undertaken on behalf of families.

It is worth highlighting that, as with other sections of the report, information is drawn from casework data and interviews with families. In regards to matters of health, neither process was designed to include any sort of health assessment to explore or develop health issues. Staff members are not medically trained and rely on casework processes and self-identified health issues.

In interviews, several family members reported experiencing symptoms that are associated with, or are risk factors for, mental ill-health. Experiences of trauma, prolonged periods of stress and anxiety, and complex grief following the death of close relatives and friends, were continuing to affect people’s lives. A full exploration of these issues is beyond the scope of the current report and will be discussed in a separate report specifically focusing on the health and well-being experiences of refugee families going through the reunion process.³⁹



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Greater Glasgow
and Clyde

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Y SU E



GP registration

GP registration is a key initial indicator of access to health services in the UK. All families that had engaged with the project reported that they had registered with a GP.

Two-thirds of families (68%) were able to register their newly arrived family members themselves. If the sponsor had been living in the UK for a longer time and had some knowledge of the health system, or if the sponsor or new arrival had higher levels of English, registration was not generally a problem. This is an example of when the integration experience of the sponsor can aid other family members who have just arrived.

In a third of cases (32%), families required support or advocacy from the project before they were able to register. If family members had lower levels of English they were more likely to need support to register. Several families had faced problems registering with GP practices because interpreters were not provided to complete registration forms. This presents a fundamental barrier to accessing health services for families who do not have English language.

Red Cross caseworkers supported families to complete registration forms and write covering letters on behalf of families. In a quarter of cases requiring support (8% of families overall) a Red Cross volunteer or staff member had to accompany families to the practice before they were successfully registered. Larger families with children were more likely to face repeated problems and need support.

Other health referrals and advocacy

Caseworkers provided additional health advocacy for 30% of families. The kinds of advocacy and support required varied. Some required general advocacy, for example follow up with GPs and dentists where there had been difficulties booking appointments or accessing interpreters. In other cases support was more specific to individual's needs, for example requests to follow up specialist referrals. In other cases individuals were supported to access health advice from NHS 24 out of hours for emergency issues.

Two internal referrals were made to the Red Cross Mum's Service. Another two women who were in the middle of their pregnancies when interviewed had accessed services through their GP and did not report any problems. Beyond access to services it was not within the scope of the research to explore experiences of engaging with health services during pregnancy and post birth.

Individuals who presented with specific trauma and torture related issues were referred to specialist mental health services including Freedom from Torture and to counselling services provided by Lifelink. Advocacy was also done with GPs for referrals to the COMPASS team – an NHS specialist mental health service for refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow which currently has a long waiting list. Ten families (20%) were invited to participate in a short-series of group therapy sessions offered by Freedom from Torture specifically for families on the project, and eight families (16%) took up this service.

In two families there were complex support needs because of severe long-term mental or physical health conditions of family members. Caseworkers made referrals for these individuals to social work services. In both cases this took several months to set up and was complicated by initial disputes over entitlements to support. One family we interviewed had been very concerned about their adult son and how his distress was affecting other family members. Getting appropriate care for him had been a key priority since arriving and they had tried repeatedly to get help from health services.

Families were also referred to dentists, in some instances for emergency treatment. There was greater confusion amongst families about dental services than about GPs. Three families brought issues to the project about having to pay for services that they had not expected to have to pay for. This highlights the need for greater information and clarity about entitlements to dental treatment, emphasising the fact that some treatments require payment even if you are registered with an NHS dentist.



Knowledge of the health system

Many new arrivals had little knowledge or understanding about how the health system in Scotland works:

We needed the support of the Red Cross because we didn't know the system, we didn't know how to go about those things and the healthcare system in my country is different. Normally when people get ill they just go to the hospital.
(Wife, Sudan)

One of the sessions within the service's Life Skills education programme was about the health system and how to find further information. Families required information not only about where to go, but also about how to engage with health services and expectations around timescales of referrals.

Interpreters

Individuals from three families we interviewed reported having problems with interpreters either in GP surgeries or in specialist services. These included problems getting interpreters for appointments, problems understanding telephone interpreters and family members being asked to interpret. A father who was not confident speaking English explained the potential consequences of the latter:

If I take my son to the hospital and they ask me questions regarding allergies to some medicines, and if I give the wrong answer, that will put myself and my son in a difficult situation and even

dangerous situation. This is not like going and buying something from the shop or going and doing something simple - if you make a mistake it's no bother. Every time I go anywhere and they don't bring me interpreters, for example the Job Centre etc., it's OK, I can manage myself to a certain extent. But when it comes to health I think it is important for the whole thing to be interpreted and the whole thing to be understood by both sides.
(Father, Syria)

This man estimated that interpreters were provided for his family only in about 40% of health appointments. His quote above illustrates the difficulties for people who have some limited English and are not offered interpreters. He explained that on one occasion when his wife had needed emergency services she had had no interpreter. He explained that he had not been thinking clearly to request an interpreter when he called the ambulance, but it is significant that he was also not offered one in these circumstances.

In two cases women had been uncomfortable speaking through a male interpreter and reported that they had not been able to answer the GP's questions fully because they were embarrassed. One woman commented:

It was very embarrassing for me because I was asked some questions I couldn't give the answer to because of embarrassment and I couldn't explain some of the things that were wrong with me because I didn't want to say, I didn't want to talk about them.
(Mother, Syria)

A lack of provision of interpreters, or of interpreters of a gender the person felt happy speaking through, meant that people were not always able to fully understand what was being said in appointments or respond to doctors' enquiries. This left them at risk of not having their medical needs addressed. More systematic research on this issue is needed to gain a clearer understanding of the proportions of people having problems accessing adequate interpreting provision.

COMPARISON WITH FAMILIES IN WEST YORKSHIRE: HEALTH

All of the five families in West Yorkshire had registered with a doctor. Three received help registering from friends or community centre staff. Two were able to register on their own due to family members having a good level of English.

The three families who required language assistance described problems with interpreters at GP practices. Sponsors in two of these families were not offered interpreters. One was told that he had a high enough English level and therefore did not need one. Two spouses, who were provided with an interpreter, reported having trouble understanding their accents. A sponsor and spouse from a family with a high level of English described how in spite of their language skills they struggled to understand some medical vocabulary. This had been especially stressful as they were being presented with a potentially serious medical condition.

Families lacked awareness of the health system and lacked understanding of procedures regarding booking appointments and waiting times. One family was accompanied by community centre staff to appointments when the wife became pregnant. This family explained that this person provided significant help in setting up appointments and helping them to understand the system.

Health recommendations

- > NHS Health Boards should establish a 'single point of contact' with an understanding of the family reunion journey and refugee family members' rights, that would work with the British Red Cross Travel Assistance programme to enable:
 - > smooth registration with health services for new arrivals;
 - > early identification and planning for new arrivals with immediate health issues or long-term support needs to ensure they are linked into appropriate services as soon as possible.
- > GP practices should ensure interpreting support is available for families to register.
- > NHS Health boards should provide specialist mental health and therapeutic support to families who require this.
- > Reunited families should be enabled to access community based and third sector mental health support and other services such as carer support networks where these are required.

5.4 Integration experiences | Language

Key findings

- > New arrivals generally had low levels of English with 67% assessed at Access 2 (Entry 1) and 15% at Access 3 (Entry 2).
- > Learning English was a key priority for arriving family members: 80%⁴⁰ of people over the age of 16 accessed ESOL provision, 68% of these joining first the WEA ESOL class provided through the project.
- > Barriers to attending ESOL included childcare commitments, pregnancy and poor physical and mental health.
- > When one family member has higher levels of English language than others this can both be a resource to integration and also a potential detriment if it creates dependency.

This section looks at key indicators related to language: what are refugee family members' English language levels when they arrive in the UK? What are the types of English educational opportunities people have been able to access in Glasgow? It then examines the barriers to participation in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes and considers different experiences for young people and adults, as well as for sponsors and spouses.

Developing English language skills is a priority for many arriving family members and is seen as essential for integration. Interviewees frequently stated that a lack of English language skills was a key barrier to integration in Glasgow across many different domains.

The project provided early access to an initial assessment, opportunities to attend project English classes and onward referrals to ESOL classes for all new arrivals over the age of 16. Building language skills is critical for independently accessing information about rights and entitlements and building understanding about how different systems work in the UK.

A recent report commissioned by Glasgow's ESOL Providers, English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Glasgow: Research to increase engagement (April, 2015), provided insight into demand for ESOL in Glasgow and into how engagement and provision can be developed.

⁴⁰ Note this figure was mistakenly given as 79% in the Executive Summary. WEA attendance was 67.9% and other ESOL only 12.5%.



Language levels on arrival

In Scotland, assessment levels are measured according to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) ESOL units. This chart provides the equivalence with levels in the rest of the UK and Europe:

SCOTLAND SQA ESOL UNITS	ESOL LEVELS IN ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND	COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES (CEF)
Higher	Level 2	C1
Intermediate 2	Level 1	B2
Intermediate 1	Entry 3	B1
Access 3	Entry 2	A2
Access 2	Entry 1	A1

FIGURE 11 ESOL LEVELS COMPARISON CHART

A full break down of language assessment levels on arrival is given in the chart below. It indicates a high proportion of people arriving with low levels of English. 67% were assessed at Access 2 level, which included 13.5% at Access 2 Literacies Stage 1 (Complete Beginner), 15% at Access 2 Literacies Stage 2 (Starter) and 38.5% at Access 2 (Elementary) levels. A further 15% were assessed at Access 3 level.⁴¹

⁴¹ For new refugees in Scotland accessing the Holistic Integration Service a similar proportion had low levels of English: 64% were assessed at Access 2 level (including Literacies stage 1 and 2) (Strang et al., 2015).

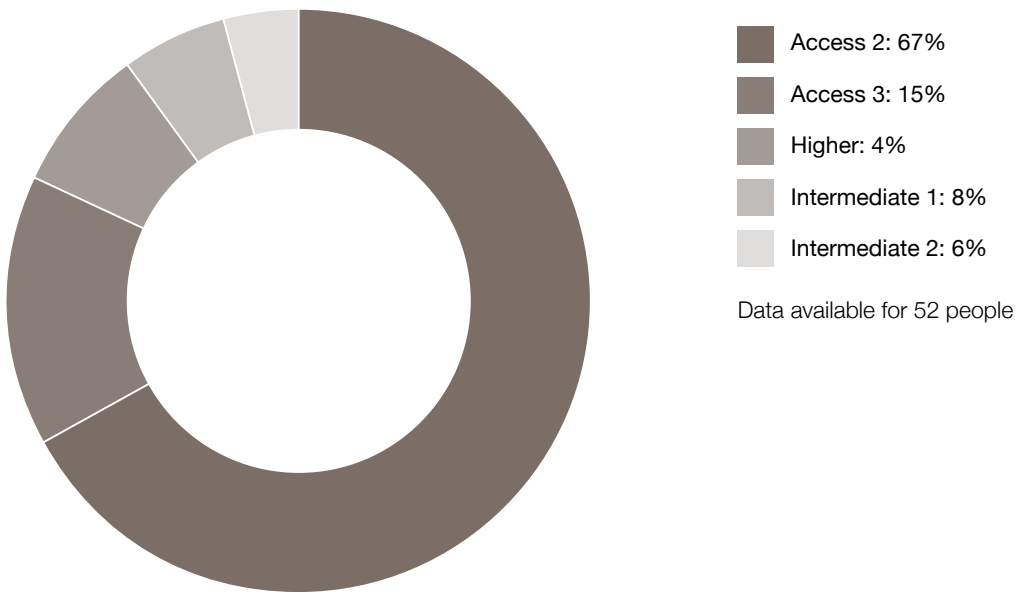


FIGURE 12 ESOL ASSESSMENT: ALL AGES

A breakdown of figures for 16-18 year olds and for 19 year olds and over shows higher levels of English amongst younger people with 30% at Intermediate level 2 or above compared to just 3% of those assessed in the older age group. However, two-thirds of young people aged 16-18 years still had lower levels of English, assessed at either Access level 2 or 3. Six people aged 19 years or above did not have ESOL assessments.

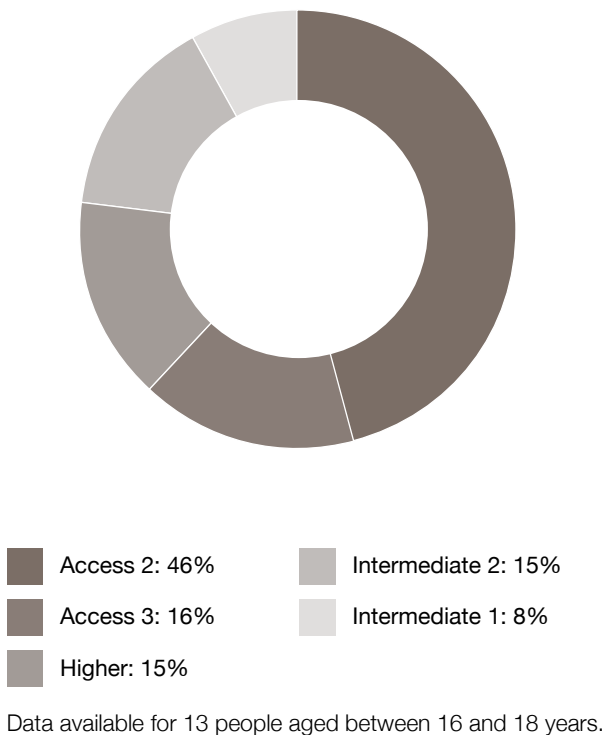


FIGURE 13 ESOL ASSESSMENT: 16-18 YEARS

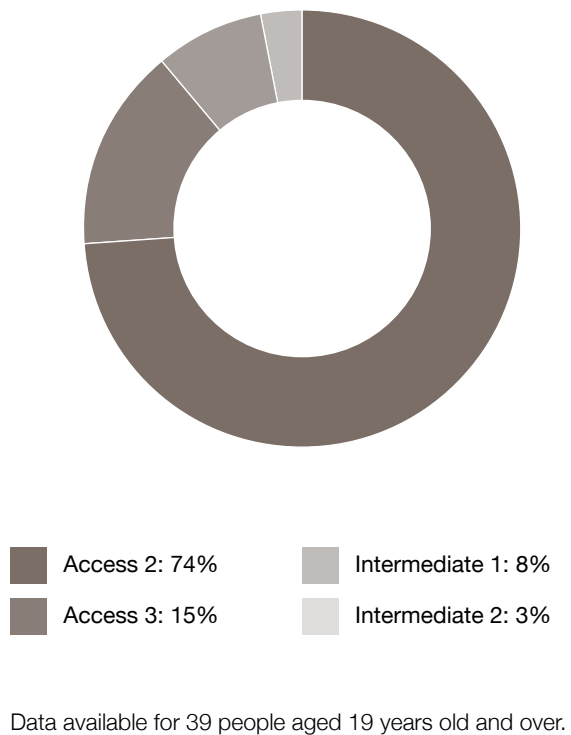


FIGURE 14 ESOL ASSESSMENT: 19 YEARS AND OVER

ESOL classes

Overall 81% of new arrivals over the age of 16 accessed ESOL provision. The majority (68%) first joined the survival English class that WEA Scotland ran specifically for families on the project. Several people accessed other ESOL classes either simultaneously or in progression. A smaller number (13%) started other community and college ESOL classes directly, which were either more appropriate to their level or more locally accessible.

It is important to note that whilst many people attended WEA classes regularly, 11 people attended the classes only once. The reasons for this were varied. Three people then moved quickly on to college classes. Six chose to attend community ESOL classes that were easier for them to access. Two people had language levels that were too advanced for the level of the class.

Eight people (14%) did not access ESOL classes due to a variety of reasons including: poor mental health and learning difficulties (5%); already being fluent in English (4%) and starting work (2%). One woman with three children who was still living in temporary accommodation said she preferred to be settled before starting classes. Another older woman in her 60s also did not take up classes.

During a focus group, women stressed that language was a main integration barrier, impacting on their ability to find information and complete important tasks. They highlighted the importance of the service providing ESOL classes through WEA Scotland and giving information and guidance on other ESOL provision in Glasgow.

One Pakistani woman had assumed that she would have to pay for private English classes in the UK. Through the project she was able to improve her language skills and to build meaningful social connections through WEA Scotland's ESOL classes.

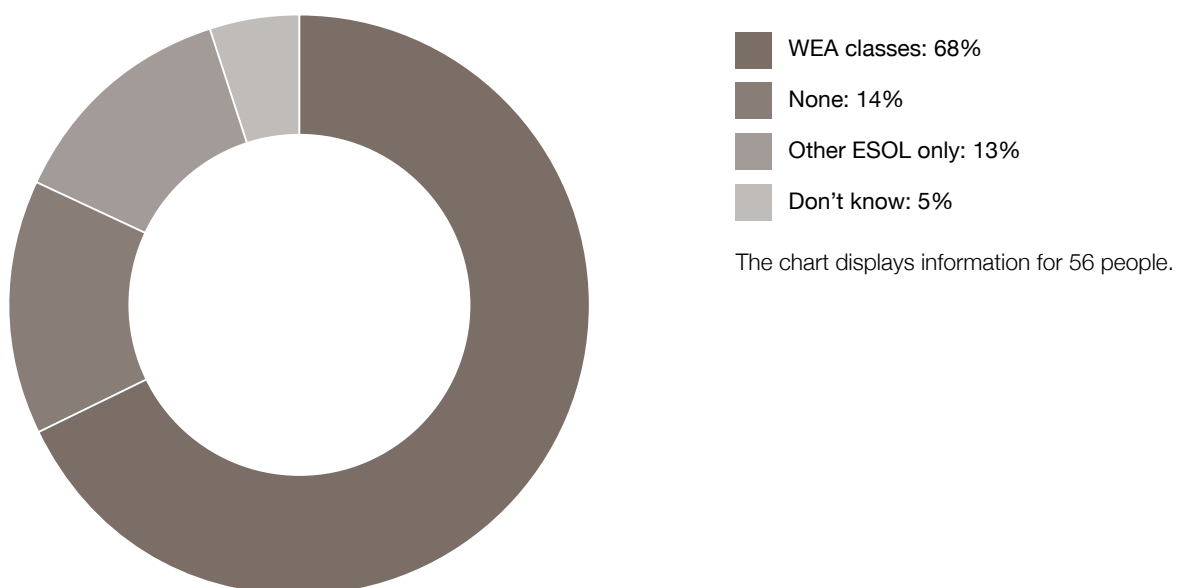


FIGURE 15 UPTAKE OF ESOL CLASSES

Barriers to accessing ESOL classes

Although most people were able to access ESOL provision, some faced difficulties starting or continuing with classes. For families with children, parents were often unable to go to ESOL classes before their child started school. For some families with younger children either a lack of crèche provision was a barrier or, in the case of the project where crèche provision was provided, the logistics of getting the whole family into the city centre for classes was a barrier. Other women also dropped out of ESOL classes due to pregnancy, though some then found classes more locally. There is a clear gender dimension to these barriers to access classes and an indication of the need for locally accessible provision.

A small number (6%) stopped or were unable to start ESOL classes due to poor mental and/or physical health. A lack of ability to concentrate and pain were also identified as barriers by some sponsors. In an interview one reported dropping out of college due to a lack of concentration and physical pain as a result of having been tortured. From the sponsor’s perspective, it is also important to recognise that a family’s arrival and the demands at this time to help them attend appointments can impact on their own class attendance.

Before the end of the service, all clients who were eligible were invited to attend a support session to apply to college online. The session was run collaboratively by the Red Cross and WEA.

COMPARISON WITH FAMILIES IN WEST YORKSHIRE: ESOL ACCESS

The language levels of families in West Yorkshire varied. One new arrival was fluent in English, having worked as an English teacher in Syria, whilst four others were at a more basic level.

Confusion surrounded rights and entitlements to ESOL classes for three of the families who participated in the research. One family who wanted to access college ESOL was under the impression that a referral from the Job Centre was required, and that applying to college independently meant that you had to pay. Two other families had been told that they would have to be in the UK for six months before they could access college ESOL. Subsequently two new arrivals had not attempted to enrol in college. It is likely that this misinformation stems from adult asylum seekers in England only becoming eligible for free ESOL classes after being in the country for six months. This highlighted a lack of awareness about rights and entitlements of people arriving through family reunion among both refugee families themselves and educational institutions.

Only one new arrival and two sponsors had managed to access college ESOL since they had arrived in the UK. Another sponsor had applied but had been on a college waiting list for eight months. The other new arrivals who required ESOL had managed to access classes in local community centres, libraries and churches. However, two women had stopped attending when their circumstances changed: one moved house and was too far away from the classes she was regularly attending, whilst another became pregnant and felt that she would not be able to restart classes until the baby was older.

Language acquisition differences

The refugee sponsor often had better English skills due in part to being in the UK for longer and having had the opportunity to build more social connections. As a result, newly-arrived family members were often dependent on sponsors for support, at least initially. Having experienced language barriers themselves, some sponsors we interviewed had strongly encouraged their family members to learn English. One man explained:

She's a graduate too. But she doesn't speak English and she won't be able to fill in the forms. I have borrowed many books from the college for her to improve her language. I'm going to share these. I need her to be an educated person.

(Father, Sudan)

English language acquisition is important for new arrivals not only so they can complete practical tasks themselves and build their own connections, but also to reduce the linguistic dependency on sponsors.

Language acquisition is undoubtedly easier at a younger age, which was noted by some families. One father, who had been here for over a year and spoke little English, noted that his children were able to gain a greater knowledge of the language in a shorter period of time:

Considering that they have only been here for six months his English is very good. His sister got her marks and she is at the top of the class.

(Father, Syria)

Faster language acquisition means that children are able to adapt more quickly to their new surroundings. Although there are many benefits to this, this can lead to a change in the dynamics of relations within families. A young woman commented:

If we want to be realistic, my mum now in this country is dependent on me because my English is better.

(Young woman, Iran)

When compared with individual refugees or asylum seekers who have to manage alone, the mutual support that family members can offer each other can be seen as a positive aspect of family integration. Yet it is important to recognise the potential strains this can also create. Situations where a parent becomes reliant on the child's language skills can result in a role reversal of the child-parent relationship. There is a need for further research into how language abilities impact on this and other dynamics within families.

Language recommendations

- > ESOL providers should continue to ensure early access to initial assessment and ESOL classes after arrival.
- > ESOL providers should increase provision of low level classes with childcare provision, particularly in community settings (in line with the recommendation of recent research by Glasgow ESOL Providers Forum).
- > Colleges should make the application process more accessible to those with limited English and IT skills and provide support sessions for application and follow up steps to ensure access to courses.
- > Specialist intensive ESOL provision for young people should be increased both in community settings and colleges so that young people are able to engage and progress with language learning as soon as possible:
 - > ensure enough of this provision starts at lower levels;
 - > develop clear progression pathways and, where feasible, enable class cohorts to progress together as with the Red Cross Chrysalis programme.



5.5 Integration experiences | Education - children and young people

Key findings

- > On average it took two months before children were enrolled in schools.
- > Children and young people in more than half of the families we interviewed with school-aged children had experienced significant periods of disruption to their education (between 5 months and 3 years) before they arrived in Scotland.
- > Less than half of 16-18 year olds supported by the project had been able to find a college place.
- > There is a gap in education provision and clear integration pathways for young people aged 16-18 years.

Enrolling in school or college is a key priority for the integration of children and young people arriving through family reunion. Engagement in school is important not only for immediate educational opportunities but for building friendships and connections in a new city. For many children this is an opportunity to settle into a 'normal' routine after months and sometimes years of insecurity and having to move from place to place. Full time education provides an environment with a rich and wide range of opportunities to support integration in a cohort of other children or young people.

This section outlines the starting point for children and young people arriving through family reunion. It presents data on enrolment times, on experiences of school in the UK and on disruption to schooling prior to arrival.

Schools

Gaps in education

Due to the upheaval families faced in their home countries and their journeys to the UK, it was common for children to experience significant gaps in their education. Seven families we interviewed had school-aged children, all of whom had been out of school for a period before arriving in the UK. In some cases this was relatively short, but in more than half (four families) children had been out of school for between 5 months to 3 years.

In one family the children had faced greater difficulties in accessing regular schooling because they were classed as stateless within their country of origin and were not entitled to free government schools. As such the father had to pay for his children to attend private schools. Limited money meant that not all the children were able to attend at once and instead took turns each year, resulting in the children falling behind in their education.

During a focus group with primary and secondary school-aged children, the young participants stressed that they had looked forward to starting school and had felt worried about falling behind.

School enrolment

Twenty-two families (44%) had school-aged children and there were a total of 51 school-aged children. On average it took two months to enrol children in schools in Glasgow.⁴² In the quickest case it took around four weeks (26 days) and in the longest it took three and a half months (108 days). In general it took longer for enrolment in secondary school than primary school.

It is important to note that some children did not to begin the enrolment process for school immediately following their arrival. In some instances they arrived during school holidays. In other cases families chose to wait until they have moved before settling their children in school, especially those who were living in acutely overcrowded housing situations on arrival.

Overall 23% of families with school-aged children enrolled their children in school without the support of the project, whilst 77% were given information or support by their caseworker. Some families faced multiple challenges including: delays in getting initial appointments with schools; problems with accessing interpreters; and delays in the Foreign National checks required before enrolment. In a few cases this required substantial advocacy work from caseworkers. In one case additional advocacy from the Glasgow City Council’s English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service was needed before a child was able to enrol in school. Some children were unable to start school because families could not afford school uniforms and had to wait until grant applications for this came through.

In a focus group, women reported difficulties enrolling their children in school mainly due to their lack of English and knowledge of catchment areas. Other issues that arose from the schools’ side have included school staff being unclear about the process of the Foreign National Check and whether tasks were the responsibility of the school or the EAL Service.

Children and young people stated that they felt very bored whilst waiting to start school or college, especially in cases where some siblings were able to start school before others. Delays in school enrolment also had a significant impact on parents, who were often unable to start ESOL classes due to childcare requirements.

In four cases children spent a few weeks or months in one school and then had to move schools when they moved house. Children in one family had been in school for five months when they had to move. In an interview the children said that they were sad to leave the new friends they had made. However, their father also pointed out:

They are very experienced because they left Eritrea, they had friends there. They have friends in Ethiopia, they have friends in [west Glasgow], you know... They already experienced it.
(Father, Eritrea)

Adapting to new areas and building new friendships had been the pattern of these children’s experiences for some time. Alongside the disruption of this, their parents also recognised the resilience the children had developed to begin again.

At the end of the project half the families with children were still waiting to move: eight families were still in temporary accommodation and a further three were trying to move from overcrowded settled accommodation. The children in these families were still facing the possibility of moving school.

Impressions of school

Overall the children we spoke with in interviews and focus groups who had started school in Glasgow reported that they were enjoying it. When asked what they liked about school, they mentioned: using computers; having lunch; making friends; having supportive teachers; playing games; playing sports; and studying.

Some children made comparisons with their school experiences in their home country. Three children felt that their teachers in Somalia were too relaxed and that they learned more in school in the UK. Their father stated:

They’re really enjoying the experience of going to school... Sometimes they wake at 7am saying, “Dad let us go”, because they want to go to school at 8am although the school starts at 9am!
(Father, Somalia)

Most children reported feeling settled in school in Glasgow and saw it as a central part of their lives. During visual exercises with the children of families interviewed they were asked to draw their local area and their schools often featured prominently.

⁴² Data on start date was available for 45 children. For 31 children we had an exact start date and the average time it had taken for them to enrol in school was 64 days. For 14 children we had only an approximate start date. When these estimated dates were included the average was 56 days.

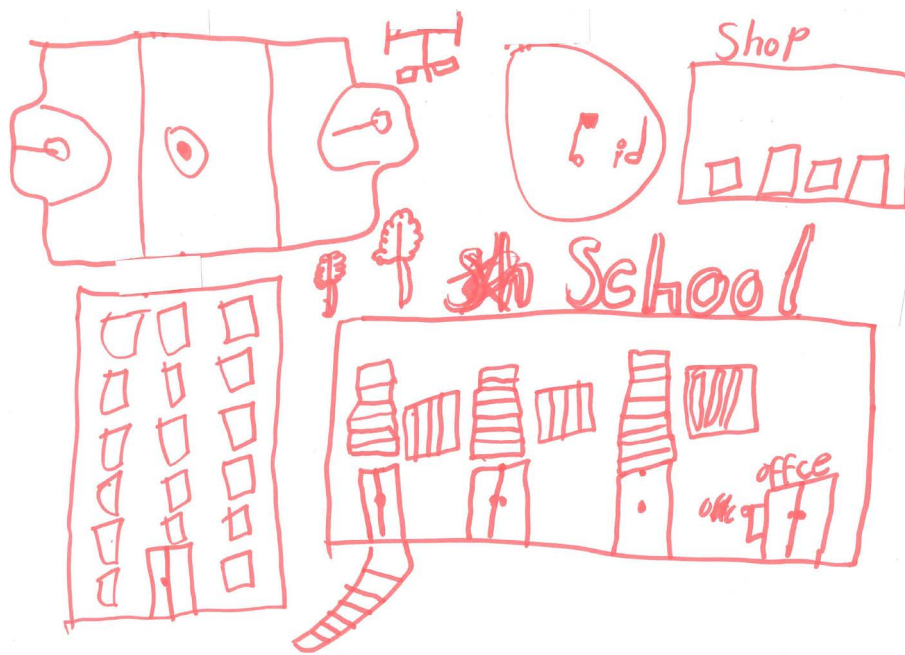


FIGURE 16 MAP OF LOCAL AREA DRAWN BY A PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGED SOMALI BOY



FIGURE 17 MAP OF LOCAL AREA DRAWN BY A PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGED SYRIAN BOY



FIGURE 18 MAP OF LOCAL AREA DRAWN BY A SECONDARY SCHOOL-AGED SOMALI BOY

When asked during a focus group how settled they felt in school now, all of the participants stated “very settled”. School represents an opportunity to make friends, to learn English, to re-start their education and to gain knowledge and experience of Scottish culture: all of which are key for integration.

Challenges and bullying

It is important to note that whilst most of the children we spoke with reported that they enjoyed school, others have had more difficult experiences including some who have reported bullying. This is an area which requires more in-depth research to get a clearer understanding of the challenges as well as the opportunities children experience in school.⁴³

Children in three families reported incidents of bullying. In one interview a girl described being targeted because she wore a hijab. In another family, a girl described how classmates targeted her siblings due to their lack of English and because they were from a different culture. In this case she was able to help her siblings to make light of the situation at the time and the teachers then stepped in to address the situation. One serious case of bullying of a child on the project led to that child having to move schools.

Starting school has therefore not always been a smooth process, impacting on children’s ability to settle. Another challenge for children has been moving schools after their families have moved from temporary flats to permanent housing in new locations.

Integration benefits for the whole family

The benefits of school for re-establishing routines and for building new connections are important not only for children but for the whole family. This is especially the case when parents are struggling to re-establish daily routines and to connect with others in the city through work.

Some mothers we interviewed reported that the local school was one of the few places they knew how to get to. Women, who had not engaged in ESOL classes or the project’s Life Skills programme and were not confident in travelling independently into the city, would go regularly to drop-off and collect their children at the local school.

43 A recent report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, ‘Prejudice-based bullying in Scottish schools: A research report’ (2015), has made a number of recommendations which aim to improve responses to the issues associated with prejudice-based bullying in schools.

Education options for 16-18 year olds

Older teenagers in reunited families face specific barriers to continuing their education in the UK. Whilst there is a legal entitlement for schools to provide education for anyone up to the age of 16, this is not a requirement for those aged 16-18 years. It is usually assumed that young people in refugee families arriving at this age would not cope with going straight into mainstream school classes to study Highers because of language levels and would be better placed in college.⁴⁴ This means that they miss out on the benefits of a school environment with the possibility to join a cohort of peers for a fuller programme of activities and all the wider integration benefits this brings.

Unlike children who can enrol in school at any time during of the school year, college intakes are usually only once or twice a year. The delays young people experience in pursuing their educational goals has led to several feeling that they are wasting time and falling further behind in their education.

The lack of activities for young people to engage in meant that many were left feeling bored and with few opportunities to engage with others of the same age:

The missing thing is to do more for young people. We are a bit lost, we're not children and we're not adults.
(Young man, Syria)

This situation has implications for their wider integration experiences beyond education pathways, limiting opportunities for building social connections, improving English language skills, gaining cultural knowledge and pursuing future career goals.

Challenges with college enrolment

Young people have faced many challenges regarding college enrolment. Demand for college places is extremely high. The application process for courses can also be confusing and extra support is often required.

Less than half (40%) of 16-18 year olds were able to find a college place over the course of the project. Similarly only one out of seven 19-22 year olds supported by the service was able to enrol in college during this period. Such numbers highlight the barriers young people face in continuing their education.

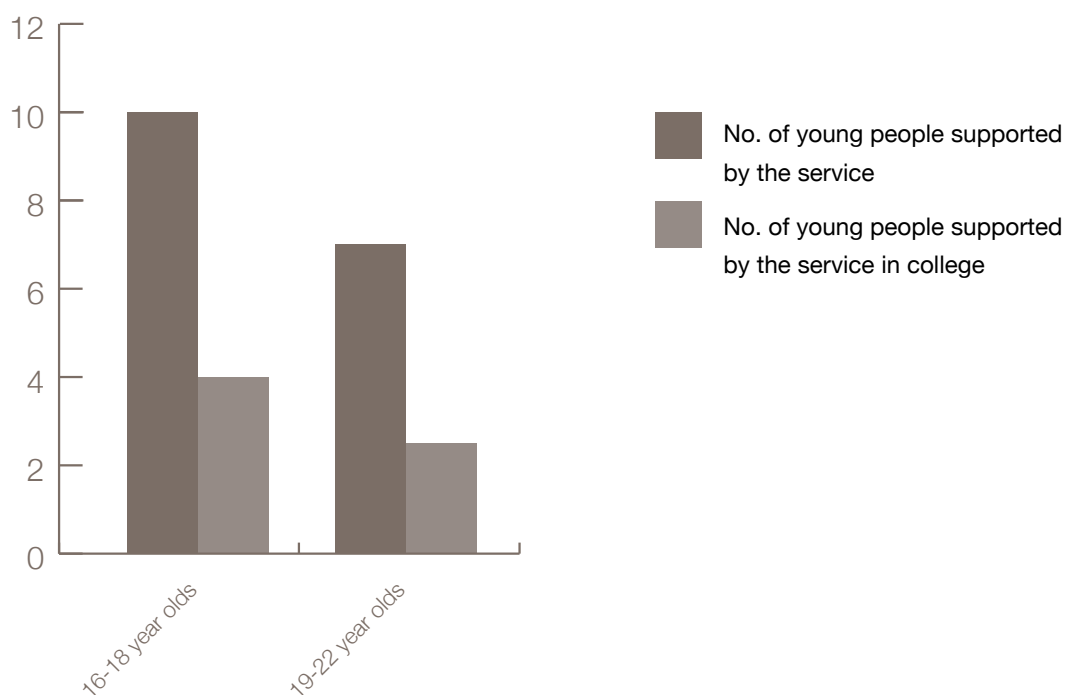


FIGURE 19 NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESSING COLLEGE BY AGE

44 Only two 16 year olds who had recently turned 16 were able to enrol in schools.

During a focus group with 16-22 year olds they discussed the lack the information and knowledge about college enrolment. One young woman stated that she only had information about one college in Glasgow. Others stated:

If there is no help, how can we know which courses to apply for, courses that are suitable for our age, is it far or near our home?
(Young woman, Iran)

We don't know the area, the system and the process for registration, which course to go for – English or others?
(Young man, Syria)

It is clear that newly arrived young people require more information and support to access college and to be fully aware of their choices. Without this they risk further delays to starting education in the UK and pursuing future goals.

Lack of choice

The project's experience was that 16-18 year olds who were fluent in English and academically very capable were directed towards college rather than school. For those who have been in school and wanted to continue with their studies, it had been disappointing not to be able to restart school.

In one case, a teenage girl had completed her secondary school education in her home country in English, but her family could not afford to pay her final school fees so her GCSE certificates were not issued. As a result she was unable to access higher level courses in the UK. Young people who face barriers to continuing their education and lack clear educational options when they arrive can feel they are not making the most of their abilities.

All those who were enrolled in college already were studying ESOL courses rather than other courses. One young woman who was a fluent English speaker was directed to study ESOL for a year whilst waiting to start other courses in September 2015. She described her initial frustration:

First time it was hard. I was like, “Why am I doing this, my English is OK, why am I doing this?” Then I was like, “OK, let me see” and then I will find something to do next year.
(Young woman, Zimbabwe).

Young people have taken up the opportunities offered to them and have tried to make the best use of their time whilst they wait to pursue other courses. Another young person applied to study ESOL at college with the hope that she could then pursue a master's in business or finance management. In an attempt to improve her English whilst she waited for a college place she attended the ESOL classes run by WEA. She stated:

It's a little bit weird. I'm feeling that I'm in higher level, but I'm taking a lower level class. But the teacher is giving me material that is related to my level. I have the feeling of being late.
(Young woman, Pakistan)

One young woman had had very different experience to others because she had been given the opportunity to participate in the Red Cross' Chrysalis programme, an orientation and life skills programme specifically targeted at young refugees.⁴⁵ She had been given a place on this programme soon after arrival. At the end of the course she was able to enrol immediately in a college ESOL class for young people through links established by the Chrysalis programme. This kind of focussed provision would be beneficial to many others arriving in this age group. The demand for the Chrysalis programme is extremely high: the most recent course received 176 referrals for just 15 places.

⁴⁵ www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Refugee-support/Support-for-young-refugees#Chrysalis

Education recommendations - school and colleges

- > Children and their parents should be given clear information about education options and responsibilities and enabled to make informed choices.
- > The Local Authority EAL (English as an Additional Language) service should work with schools to facilitate quicker enrolment for arriving children, and ensure free school meals and clothing grant applications are completed promptly.
- > The Scottish Government and Local Authorities should ensure right to school entry for 16 and 17 year olds to maximise the opportunity for English language progression, educational attainment and overall integration.



5.6 Integration experiences | Social connections

Key findings

- > Family separation often leads to changes in family dynamics and relations, which can be both positive and negative.
- > Opportunities to build social connections are affected by language ability, family commitments, engagement in education or work and experiences of the host society.
- > The project’s educational programme and social activities enabled people to build meaningful social connections with other new arrivals.
- > Newly arrived wives are more at risk of social isolation than others in reunited families.

Social connections or social networks are important facilitators of integration. The ‘Indicators of Integration’ framework highlights three types of social connections: bonds - within communities; bridges - with members of other communities; and links - with support services and government institutions (Ager and Strang, 2004). Bonding connections with others who share the same language, religion, ethnicity or nationality are a source of key resources for new arrivals (Cherti and McNeil, 2012; UNHCR, 2013) and can be important for a sense of identity and belonging. Bridging connections are important for integration within local communities and for broadening employment and other opportunities. Participating in activities with others in the local community can also lead to a sense of shared identity and belonging. Linking connections are important for accessing rights and entitlements and for fulfilling, or taking up, duties and responsibilities.

This section is based on information collected through interviews and focus groups. The focus groups discussed where people found emotional support, practical support and information. It was clear that family relationships were overwhelmingly the main source of both receiving and giving emotional and practical support. For new arrivals family relations were also a key source of information.

This section focuses first on relations within the family, describing the resources these bonds provide, as well as some of the challenges family members face in re-establishing relationships. It then examines other bonding connections outside the immediate family both in Scotland and with close friends and family who live further away. It also considers bridging connections with those from other communities that family members have made since arrival in Scotland. Finally, it explores linking connections to services and organisations, highlighting the role of the project in creating and facilitating different kinds of social connections.



Family relations: re-establishing connections

For reunited families, re-establishing relationships within the family was their primary and immediate focus. Relationships within the family were almost always reported as being the most important social connections for practical, material and emotional support for new arrivals.

Some people described how their relationships had grown stronger following reunion and they experienced increased levels of emotional and practical support:

Things are much better... [When] he saw that [I'm] tired, he say, 'Just sit down, don't do anything, just relax'. Even sometimes he goes to the kitchen and he cooks and prepares things for the whole family. Everything has changed, thank God.
(Mother, Syria)

For other people, re-establishing relationships after periods of separation and re-negotiating roles and responsibilities within the family were more difficult. In some cases people felt as though they no longer knew the person they were being reunited with because they had been apart for so long or because they had changed so much:

I feel actually she's a different woman, she's not my wife. Because there she was close to me, attached to me; here she can do everything she can, so she's like she doesn't need me. She feels she is in a high position now, because before she was totally dependent on me. I was the one to sustain her, to bring her food and money and everything.
(Husband, Syria)

Such changes meant that relationships within the family were sometimes strained.

It is important to recognise that in some cases the shape of the immediate family had changed either with the loss of family members, or with new additions to the family. There were particular challenges for teenagers being reunited with parents they had not lived with for a long time. In some instances young people who had been brought up by extended family members found separation from these caregivers particularly difficult. Both the supportive factors and the challenges of re-establishing relationships have been examined in greater detail in a separate report on health and well-being.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Advocacy/Refugees/family-reunion-health-wellbeing-report



Many people expressed a sense of loss regarding family members they had left behind in their home country. Men, women and children reported missing their relatives and friends and having smaller emotional support networks in the UK. One young woman commented on adjusting to separation from older siblings and grandparents:

From the beginning of my life I live with my family but now I am far from them and I miss them at the beginning, but now things become better.
(Young woman, Iran)

A Syrian man reported that the first thing he will do when he receives his travel document will be to visit his brothers in Turkey indicating the continuing importance of these connections. His son stated:

Even though this country offers [us] a lot of possibility to go back to school, housing etc., but still with that [we are] missing family and friends and would like one day to go back.
(Son, Syria)

Bonds with people outside the family

For most families their strongest social connections outside the family were with others from their own community and religious groups. People mentioned meeting and socialising with others who shared the same ethnicity, nationality and/or religion in community centres, their homes, local shops, churches and mosques. These bonding connections were particularly important for sponsors before their family's arrival.

We meet in friends' flats, sit together, cook Sudanese food, listen to music. It is refreshment for the mind.
(Father, Sudan)

The networks of social relations developed by the sponsor were a potential source of connections for new arrivals to link with others in their communities. Some new arrivals became part of these same networks. However, where these community networks were gender exclusive to men they did not necessarily enable connections for newly arrived women.

During a focus group, women stressed that they benefited from the emotional and practical support they received from their community and religious groups. Speaking the same language and having similar backgrounds meant that relationships could be formed quicker and people felt more able to ask for help. Places of worship gave opportunities for building both bonding and bridging connections. Families attended the Tamil, Iranian and Scottish churches in Glasgow, as well as the Islamic Centre and the central mosque, where they made friends and met others who shared their faith.

Young people in particular mentioned that social media was an important way of keeping in touch with close friends in different parts of the world.

Social bridges

Family members were able to make social connections with different levels of ease. Children were able to learn English quicker than adults and had opportunities to make friends at school. Women, on the other hand, had opportunities to meet other spouses at the project's group work and ESOL sessions but faced more difficulties making wider connections particularly because of language barriers. Young people who were not in school and were waiting to start college lacked opportunities to build social connections, although some met people through the Red Cross educational programme. A newly arrived male spouse mentioned that finding other men to socialise with was difficult. It had been harder for him to build connections through the project as the vast majority of spouses supported by the project were female. For adults overall, the connections they made were generally with other new arrivals rather than with more established communities.

People interviewed acknowledged their desire for meaningful relationships with people from different cultures and backgrounds. In order to integrate they felt that they needed to learn about local culture and build connections with local people. One man stated:

I'm looking to make friendship with Scottish people too. Friendship means many things. I want to learn about Scottish culture. Because my kids are going to grow up here. I want to learn [teach] my kids about Scottish culture and Sudanese culture.
(Father, Sudan)

The same man had struggled to make these connections:

Most Scottish people make a 'gap' with the foreign people. It's not easy, not easy to break that barrier.
(Father, Sudan)

Refugee family members struggled to make connections for many different reasons. Those interviewed reported experiencing various barriers including language difficulties, cultural differences, perceptions of disinterest and sometimes hostility from the host society, a lack of social opportunities, family commitments and other priorities. Comparing their life in the UK with that in their home country, people noted that a more individualistic culture in the UK made it difficult to meet new people and to forge close links. One man described the difficulty of striking up a conversation with someone on the street beyond exchanging a few words: "‘thank you’, ‘sorry’, that’s it." He observed:

People have their own business. It's like they don't much integrate. Even the Arabs and the Syrians here, it's like everyone has their own life. So a person to learn English, he has to do it by reading and writing not by talking to people like maybe in other countries. That's like social aspect. But here it's like everyone is busy, they have their own life, it's hard to interact.
(Father, Syria)

Several women amongst the new arrivals spoke of feeling isolated:

I felt lonely here in this country. In Sudan the neighbours would come and knock on the door and say hello. Here people stay in their houses. I have to accept the situation. This is the reality. I'm more alone, more isolated here.
(Wife, Sudan)

Another woman from Somalia spoke about wanting to live closer to the city centre to be able to access the mosque and meet with others from her community. She stated simply: "It's really difficult not knowing anyone."

Housing had an impact on making and sustaining social connections. When offered permanent accommodation, little consideration was given to the fact that families may have already created connections to a local area and community. There is a need to look further at the various obstacles that prevent people from building social connections and what more could be done to help people, especially those who are more isolated.

The education and social programme offered by the Red Cross and WEA enabled people to build social connections with other new arrivals:

By going over there I learn so many things. I'm feeling myself pride. Because I never used to know there are so many things over here. But [the group worker is] giving so much knowledge to us and even moreover I'm meeting so many new people over there. That's a good experience.
(Wife, Pakistan)

The project’s educational programme and social activities allowed people to gain practical skills and life skills and learn English alongside other new arrivals. These activities have been an important contact point for both bridging and sometimes bonding connections. Friendships were formed in class and during outings, whilst people gained local information and skills which allowed them to better integrate into UK society. In total 41 new arrivals accessed the Red Cross education programme and 102 people from 45 families attended social activities organised by the Red Cross. Social activities involved trips to local museums and parks. The majority of people attending the educational and social programmes were female.

Social links

The project partners played important linking roles for new arrivals. They helped families to access entitlements, navigate services, and link to other relevant organisations. In focus groups family members reported that they would have struggled to access services without the project:

It’s a different language, culture, society, laws – how can we manage without support?
(Young woman, Kuwait)

One man used the metaphor of a bridge over a river to highlight how the service helped families to reach their rights and entitlements. The man described how when a family arrives they are on the banks of a river. The project acts as a bridge over the water to the rights and entitlements on the other side. The refugee family may not even be aware that the bridge allows access to and knowledge of their rights and entitlements, but the project navigates them towards these.

Another man stated:

Here there are rights. We’re getting something in this country that we would never get at home. It’s still Great Britain. Life is very difficult, but here they respect people.
(Father, Sudan)

Sponsors, the majority of whom were men, had been able to build more linking connections than new arrivals. During a focus group men listed a variety of organisations which had offered them information and practical support and in some cases emotional support. In contrast, the organisations listed in the women’s focus group were limited solely to the partner organisations of the project.

Social connections recommendations

- The British Red Cross and Scottish Refugee Council should work with the wider voluntary sector to increase provision of life skills groups in communities and access to family social activities recognising the important psychosocial benefits such groups can provide.
- Reunited families should be given information and support to access community organisations and groups both within and outside the refugee community.
- The Red Cross and Scottish Refugee Council should work with local community based organisations and groups to raise awareness of the benefits of working with refugee families.
- The Red Cross and Scottish Refugee Council should continue to promote and develop peer education opportunities, such as refugee parent networks, for families to improve awareness of UK systems.





6 Overall recommendations

To the Scottish Government

- > Ensure that the specific needs of those arriving through family reunion are fully reflected within the New Scots Integration Strategy and its various subgroups.
- > Enable Local Authorities to issue a grant upon arrival to families who need financial assistance while awaiting mainstream benefits.
- > In line with Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015 – 2020⁴⁷ work collaboratively to ensure that all refugee family members have prompt access to ESOL provision which takes account of the different needs of learners, recognises the critical role of English language skills in the integration process and creates clear progression pathways into further training, education and employment as appropriate.

To the UK Government

- > Ensure that the relevant government department provides support to families who, while awaiting mainstream benefits, require financial assistance to meet their basic needs.
- > Ensure that the needs of individuals arriving through family reunion are acknowledged and reflected in the policies of all departments with a role in refugee integration, including those responsible for education, language, housing, welfare and health.

⁴⁷ Education Scotland. 2015, Welcoming Our Learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015 – 2020 The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Strategy for Adults in Scotland 2015. Edinburgh: Education Scotland [Online]. Available from www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ESOLStrategy2015to2020_tcm4-855848.pdf

- > Work with the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure access to language assessment and ESOL provision for arriving family members which takes account of the different needs of learners, recognises the critical role of English language skills in the integration process and creates clear progression pathways into further training, education and employment as appropriate.

To the Home Office

- > Publish transparent and timely data on the number of people arriving on family reunion visas to join sponsors with refugee status or humanitarian protection.
- > Address the recommendations from the Red Cross (2015) *Not so straightforward: the need for qualified legal support in refugee family reunion* report to simplify the process in order to minimise the length, stress and impact of separation on sponsors and applicants and improve their starting point for integration post-reunion.

To Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

- > Establish a ‘single point of contact’ in DWP and HMRC with an understanding of the refugee family reunion journey and family members’ rights, to enable smoother processing of all benefits claims and change of circumstance adjustments.
- > Ensure new arrivals understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements and are supported to access appropriate benefits in the shortest possible timeframe.
- > Inform all DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff about refugee family reunion and ensure they:
 - > know that applicants do not need a National Insurance Number for a benefits claim to be processed;⁴⁸
 - > provide reunited families with information on how benefits can be paid, including explaining that benefits can be paid into a joint back account or an individual bank account.
- > Continue to work closely with Scottish Refugee Council and other refugee agencies to improve employability pathways for people arriving through family reunion.

48 Department for Work and Pensions. 2015. Help available from the Department for Work and Pensions for people who have been granted leave to remain in the UK. London: Department for Work and Pensions [Online]. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/refugees-guidance-about-benefits-and-pensions/help-available-from-the-department-for-work-and-pensions-for-people-from-abroad#national-insurance-number

To Local Authorities

- > Enhance coordination with the British Red Cross Travel Assistance programme in advance of families arriving to maximise early intervention and prevention of homelessness, overcrowding and destitution.
- > Disseminate the good practice developed with Glasgow City Council (GCC) Asylum and Refugee services team on housing pathways for reuniting families with other homelessness teams in GCC and to other local authorities and Registered Social Landlords across the UK to promote the implementation of similar protocols.
- > Work together with Housing Associations to create clear mechanisms to prevent or alleviate overcrowding, particularly in cases of vulnerability.
- > Education departments and in particular English as an Additional Language services to work with schools to facilitate enrolment for arriving children, and ensure free school meals and clothing grant applications are completed promptly.

To all public and voluntary sector agencies

- > Ensure the principles of early intervention, prevention and partnership working, as recommended by the Christie Commission⁴⁹ are applied to people arriving through family reunion.
- > Provide refugee sponsors with relevant information and guidance on practical considerations, rights, responsibilities and options to enable them to prepare for their family’s arrival.
- > Ensure arriving family members are informed of their rights, responsibilities and options prior to arrival in the UK to allow them to prepare and make informed choices. Information resources should be developed and adopted, building on the project’s Welcome Booklet.

To NHS Health Boards

- > Establish a ‘single point of contact’ with an understanding of the family reunion journey and refugee family members’ rights, to work with the British Red Cross Travel Assistance programme prior to arrival to enable:
 - > prompt registration with health services for new arrivals;
 - > identification of immediate health issues

49 Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services. 2011 [Online]. www.gov.scot/resource/doc/352649/0118638.pdf



or long-term support for new arrivals, and preparation to ensure that they are able to access appropriate services as soon as possible.

- > Provide specialist mental health and therapeutic support to families who require this, including specialist family therapy support, and signpost to community based and third sector services.

To Education Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council

- > Ensure options are available to 16-18 year olds to maximise their opportunity for English language progression, educational progress and overall integration through school entry, where applicable, or access to intensive language courses on arrival.
- > Improve applications processes for colleges and provide additional support to enable access to courses for people with limited English and/or IT skills.
- > In line with recommendations made within research commissioned by Glasgow's ESOL providers⁵⁰ ensure that there is sufficient and accessible ESOL provision, particularly low level classes in community settings.

To legal representatives

- > Provide information to those applying for Family Reunion about integration support services for arriving family members and protocols for accessing appropriate housing, health services and education for reunited family members.

To all stakeholders

- > Work in collaboration with the private sector, public sector, voluntary sector and local communities to create greater opportunities for building social connections through volunteering, mentoring and employment schemes.
- > Work with communities to support new arrivals to access information to improve understanding of life in Scotland, participate in community activities and develop support networks.
- > Work with local communities and businesses to encourage, support and promote the positive contributions and experiences of working with refugee families.

50 CJM Research. 2015, Glasgow's ESOL Providers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Glasgow: Research to help increase engagement Insert ESOL research in Glasgow Reference. [Online] Available from: www.glasgowlearning.org.uk/documents/2426



Appendix One | Overview data

The TCN Family Integration Service provided support to more than 60 reunited families. These overview statistics present the data for 58 of these families available at the time of analysis.

Country of origin

Families originated from 16 different countries. Sudan was the most common country of origin of with 16 cases, followed by Syria with nine and Iran with eight. Four families each were originally from Eritrea and Pakistan, whilst three each were from Sri Lanka and Gambia. Other countries of origin included Somalia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Guinea.

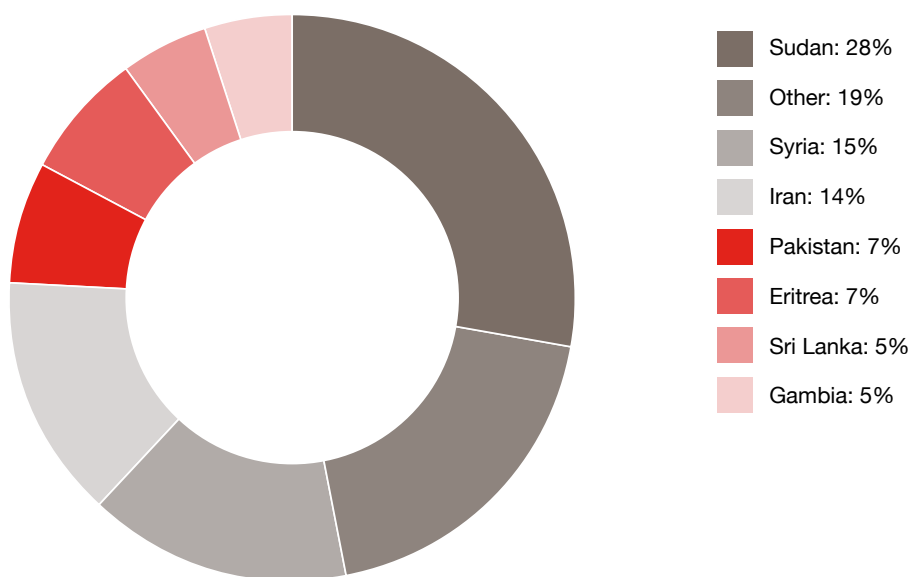


FIGURE 20 FAMILIES' COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Language

Almost half of the families spoke Arabic. Other common languages included Farsi and Urdu, and smaller numbers of families spoke Tamil and English. Less common languages were Somali, Amharic, Tigre, Pashtu, Wolof, Shona, Swahili and French.

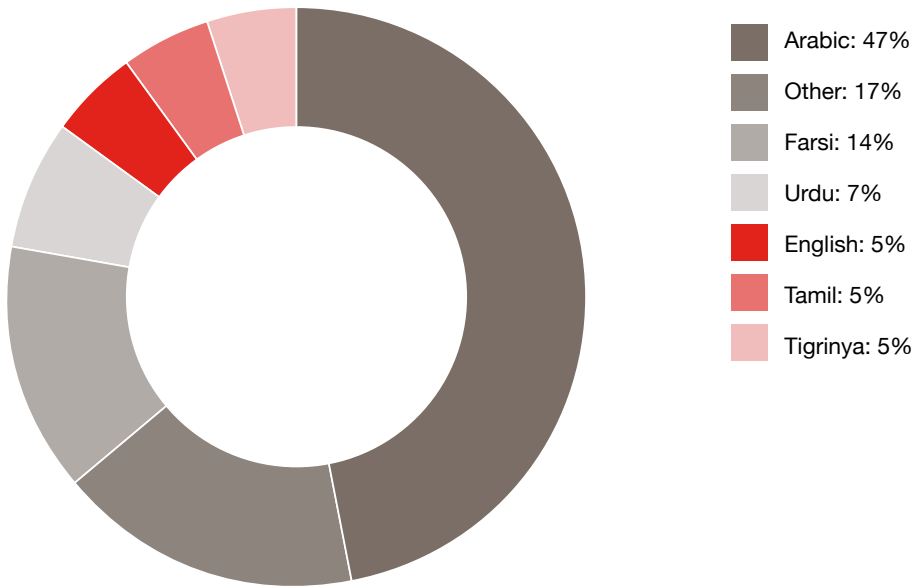


FIGURE 21 LANGUAGE OF NEW ARRIVALS

Family composition

The number of newly arriving family members and their relationship to the refugee sponsor differed considerably.

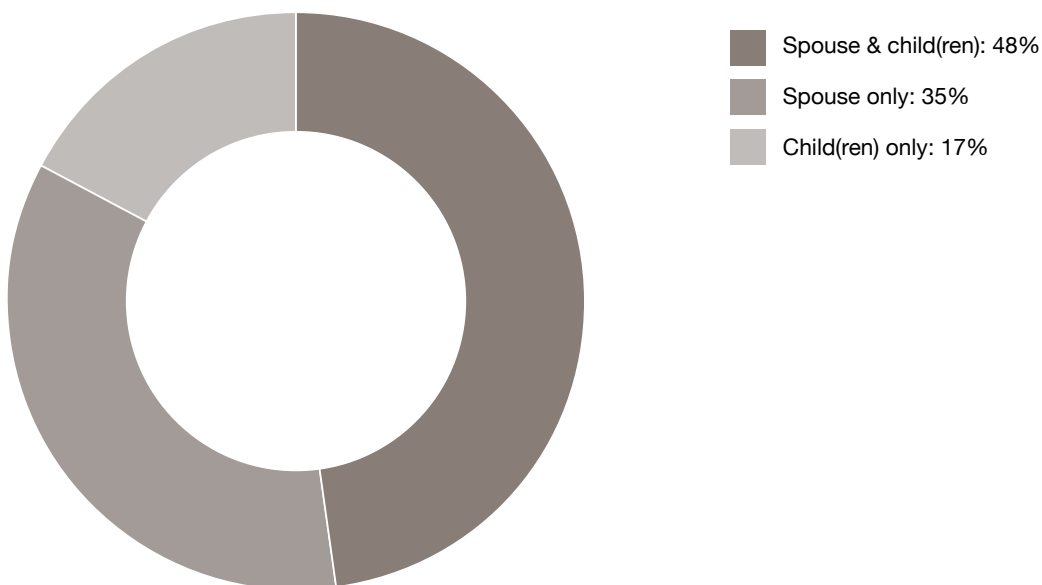
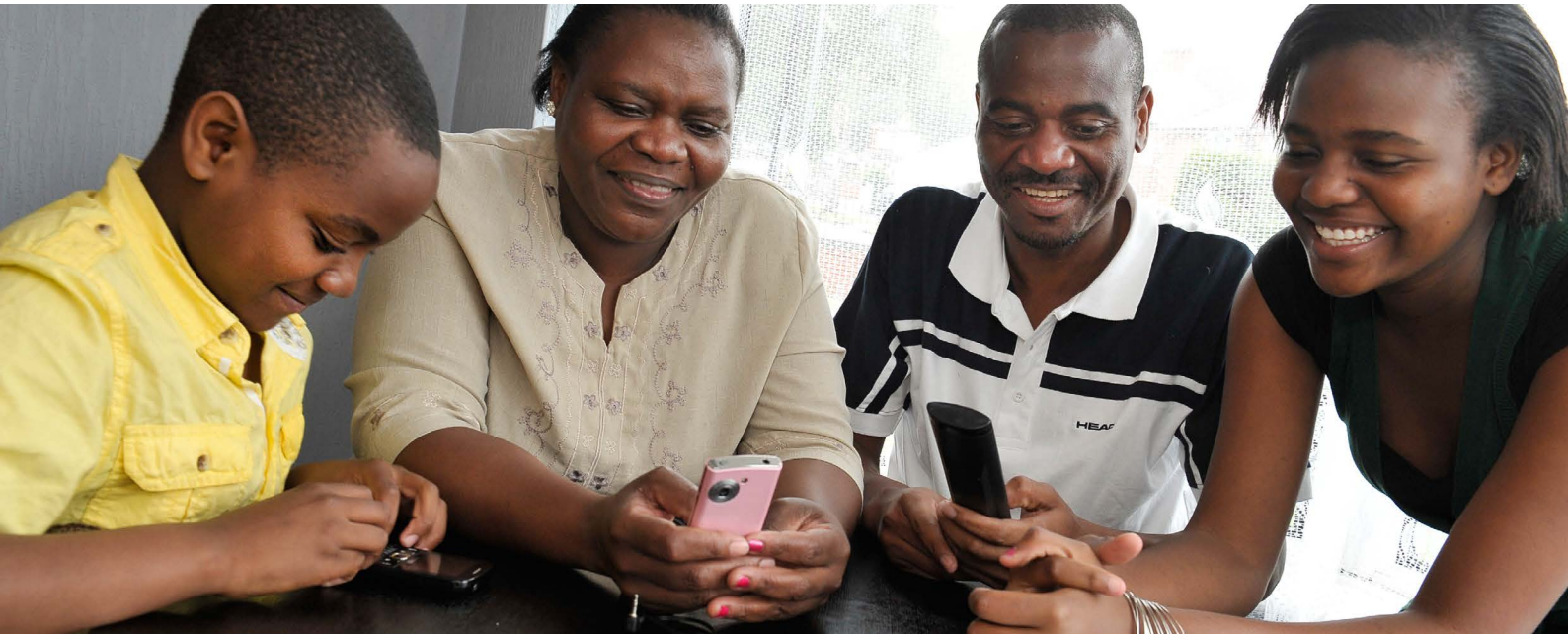


FIGURE 22 FAMILY COMPOSITION



48% of cases were a spouse with children arriving and 17% were only children arriving (including four cases where a child had just turned 18). In 35% of cases new arrivals were spouses only, the majority of whom were women coming to join husbands.

The total size of families once reunited varied between two and nine people, whilst the number of family members arriving to join a refugee sponsor was between one and eight.

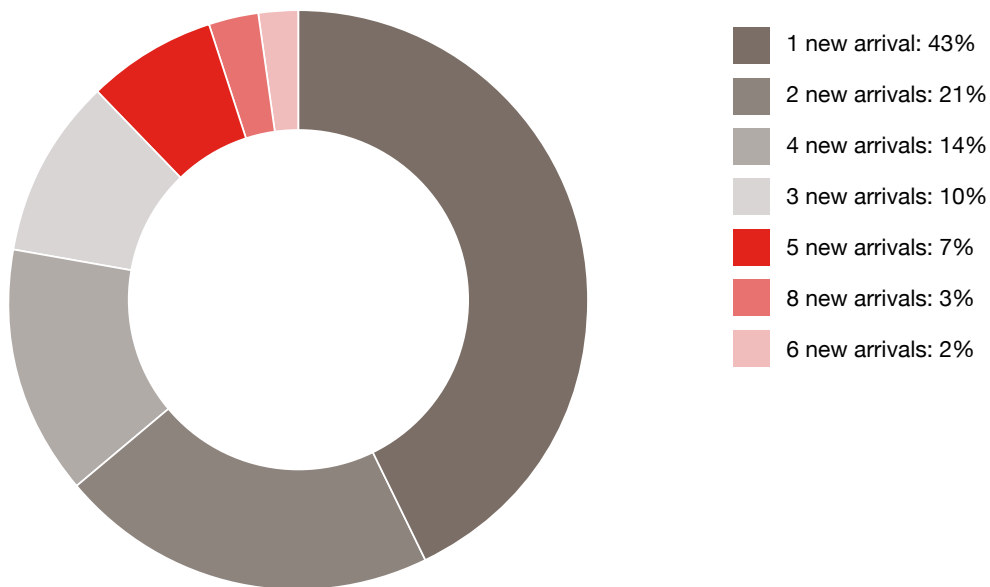


FIGURE 23 NUMBER OF NEW ARRIVALS PER FAMILY

Gender

Overall amongst the new arrivals there were a slightly higher number of female family members (56%) arriving than male (44%). However, there were significant differences in the gender of adults and children. There were considerably more adult women (85%) amongst the new arrivals than men (15%). Conversely there were a higher percentage of male children (62%) than female children (38%).



FIGURE 24 GENDER OF NEW ARRIVALS - OVERALL

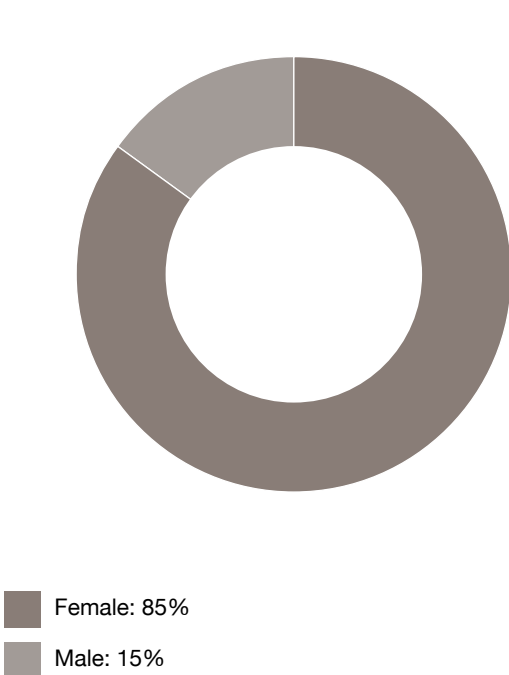


FIGURE 25 GENDER OF ADULT ARRIVALS

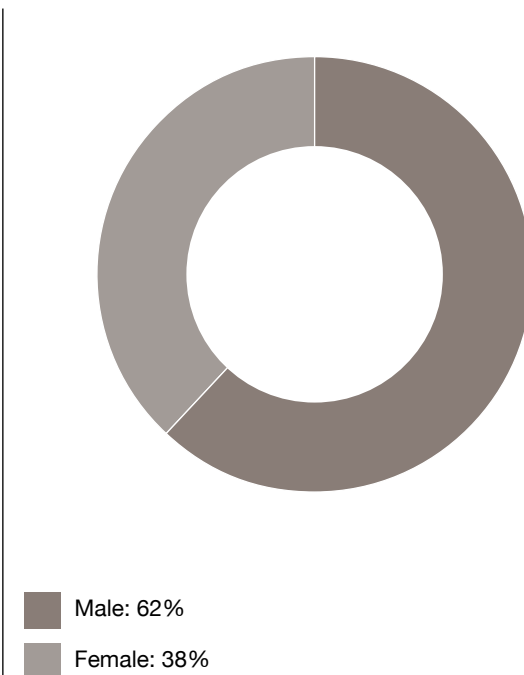


FIGURE 26 GENDER OF CHILD ARRIVALS

Age

More than half of all new arriving family members were children. In total there were 83 children (59%) and 57 adults (41%). The age of family members spanned three generations from infants to those of retirement age. The highest proportion of new arrivals was of primary school age (24%).

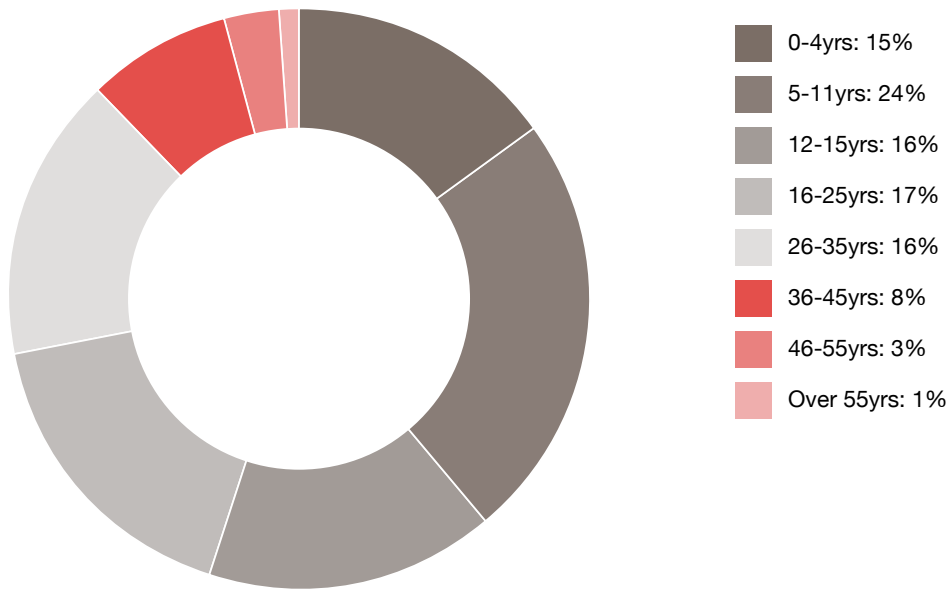


FIGURE 27 AGE OF FAMILY MEMBERS

Appendix Two | Family reunion visas



FIGURE 28 A COPY OF A FAMILY REUNION VISA IN A PASSPORT



FIGURE 29 A COPY OF A FAMILY REUNION VISA ON A SEPARATE DOCUMENT





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