

Home Office research and policy conclusions relating to the effective integration of refugees

Summary of Home Office research findings

Between 2005 and 2010, the Government published four key documents on refugee integration which set out the findings from both previous and current research work. This paper brings together the conclusions reached by the Home Office from this research in relation to how the effective integration of refugees can be facilitated by the Government.¹

The Home Office recognises that it is “essential that we support refugees in realising their full potential – economically, culturally and in terms of social inclusion.” It also notes that successful refugee integration supports wider departmental priorities, including building cohesion, reducing health inequalities, tackling extremism and increasing community empowerment.

The Home Office defines integration as taking place when refugees are empowered to: meet their responsibilities and achieve their full potential as members of British society, contribute to the community and access the services to which they are entitled. Indicators of successful integration are: employment rates; English language attainment over time; involvement in voluntary work; engagement with community organisations; the proportion of refugees taking up British citizenship; and the proportion of refugees reporting harassment.

The Home Office generally accepts that resettled refugees need at least 12 months of funded integration support. The Home Office has also repeatedly identified the 28-day period after being granted status as being critical to a successful refugee integration strategy and has focussed on providing intensive one-to-one caseworker support during this time and in the months following the asylum decision. The caseworker assists refugees to address immediate needs, alongside the development and implementation of an individualised integration plan over a year. This caseworker approach has been a successful part of all recent integration strategies, including Sunrise, RIES and the Gateway programme.

Language proficiency and access to the world of work are consistently identified as both being pivotal to the integration of refugees and the principle barriers to progress. Home Office reports have identified that caseworkers, working in partnership with mainstream service providers, have had some success in addressing these and other obstacles to integration, for example through:

¹ These reports are: Home Office, Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration, March 2005; UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009; Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009; and Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010.

- Prioritising and resolving immediate problems which inhibit integration. For example, healthcare needs may need to be addressed before language learning can be achieved; improved English may be needed before employment can be secured, etc.
- Finding routes into employment by: setting up volunteering opportunities: approaching employment agencies to outline refugees' skills profiles: and assisting with re-training, re-accreditation and helping refugees to apply for jobs.
- Facilitating access to mentoring programmes, like Time Together
- Helping to resolve specific issues that arise (e.g. dealing with harassment, helping with family reunion, identifying further education opportunities)

The Survey of New Refugees (2010) provides strong indicators of successful integration, 21 months after refugees were given protection:

- Those reporting a high level of English language ability increased from 26% to 38%, while those reporting a low level of English decreased from 38% to 15%.
- Employment rates increased from 34% at eight months to 49% at 21 months, with those in full-time jobs increasing from 22% to 33%. In the same period, refugees who were unemployed and looking for work fell from 23% to 12%.
- During the 21 months, at least 25% of new refugees were studying.

Identified strategies for improved integration

Home Office' analysis of integration programmes to date have concluded that they have been successful in promoting refugee integration (as defined in the criteria above), but it has also consistently identified strategies which would further improve refugee integration:

- Refugees need to be provided with their documentation as soon as possible after being granted status and certainly before the end of the 28 day move on period.
- Participation in intensive language courses at the earliest opportunity is integral to integration and the availability and accessibility of ESOL courses need to improved, along with access to courses appropriate to specific needs.²
- At least 12% of refugees who took part in the 2010 survey had either lived on the streets or in a homeless shelter at some point in the 21-month since being granted protection. This will underestimate refugee homelessness since the survey was based on a postal questionnaire. Greater support covering the transition to more permanent housing (75% of new refugees moved home within eight months of receiving status) and prompt issuing of refugee documentation may reduce the rate of homelessness.
- The number of refugees entering employment needs to be increased, including by facilitating volunteering as a route to gain skills and references and by assisting refugees with overseas qualifications to quickly gain re-accreditation and/or retrain (at

² A paper by Jenny Philimore, "Monitoring for equality? Asylum Seekers and refugees' retention and achievement in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)" identified the quality of provision, as measured by retention rates, the achievements amongst different sub-groups of learners (categorised by English language skills), and a better, more transparent means of monitoring within colleges, as being crucial to progress.

least one-half of new refugees who had been in professional or skilled occupations in their home country held positions in the UK that were below this level).

- Strategies should be developed to address specific integration problems experienced by some groups of refugees, such as women with children and older refugees. Some nationalities may also require more support than others (e.g. almost 90% of Zimbabweans had a high level of English and 60% were employed after eight months, as compared to Eritreans of whom 20% had a high level of English and only 18% were employed eight months after receiving asylum).

Implications of research conclusions for the success of refugee integration in the future

While the Government's 2005 refugee integration strategy clearly states that refugee integration "applies equally to those who come through the asylum route or are brought to the UK through our resettlement programmes", this is no longer the case in practice.

While the positive integration indicators recorded in the New Refugee Survey cannot be solely attributed to the Sunrise pilots (as only a small number of refugees who participated in Sunrise took part in the survey), there is little doubt that the priority and resourcing given to integration work before and during Sunrise helped facilitate effective refugee integration.

For example, in the financial year ending in March 2005, the Home Office spent £11 million on integration activities; ESOL provision doubled in the three years to 2003; the Home Office acknowledged "the vital role" of Refugee Community Organisations and was committed to "sustaining their long term future"; and a National Refugee Integration Forum existed specifically to promote the integration of refugees.

However, since 2012, funding for programmes which facilitate the integration of refugees who have not been resettled to the UK has been either substantially reduced (e.g. ESOL provision) or withdrawn completely (e.g. RIES). In addition, the availability of mainstream support services from voluntary organisations, local authorities and refugee community organisations is much reduced due to funding cuts.

This is a particular concern given the very substantial number of refugees who come through the asylum route. In the last five years (2010-2014), just under 49,000 individuals were granted protection in the UK, either at the initial decision or on appeal (not including dependants). In 2014 alone, nearly 10,000 individual were recognised as needing protection. These individuals are receiving a negligible amount of integration support despite the fact that the Home Office has repeatedly concluded that such support would enable them to more quickly contribute, both economically and socially, to British society and would minimise the risks of their becoming socially isolated and victims of harassment, exploitation or those promoting radicalisation.

The importance of promoting integration at the earliest opportunity has recently been underlined by the Prime Minister who announced £20 million to pay for classes to improve the language skills of some 190,000 Muslim women who spoke little or no English and had become "segregated."³ While this is welcome, seeking to address social exclusion after it has

³ BBC, Muslim women's segregation in UK communities must end – Cameron, 18 January 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35338413>

become a problem is manifestly cost ineffective as it will be much more difficult for the individuals concerned to effectively integrate and achieve their full potential after a prolonged period of marginalisation. Months and years in which they could have been contributing to UK society will have been wasted.

In contrast to refugees who arrive through the asylum route, resettled refugees continue to receive a programme of support designed to facilitate their rapid integration into UK society. This is crucial as resettled refugees, whether they come through Gateway or through the Syrian resettlement programme, will generally be more vulnerable than refugees who manage to make their own way to the UK and will require a higher level of support in order to integrate effectively.

This fact is reflected in the Home Office's research which shows that between 50-66% of the four groups of Gateway refugees evaluated in 2009 reported physical health problems, whereas 64% of refugees who came through the asylum route reported being in good health and only 12% described their health as being bad or very bad. In relation to work, between 12-40% of Gateway refugees had worked at some point after being in the UK 18 months, but hardly any found sustained employment. In contrast, 48% of those coming through the asylum route were employed after 21 months and 33% were in full time jobs.

In addition, it should be noted that between 25-50% of Gateway refugees experienced verbal or physical harassment. Refugees who are granted status through the asylum system are likely to experience similar levels of harassment, but the evidence indicates that the integration support offered to resettled refugees over their first year means this group are more likely to seek help and report this harassment.

The Syrian resettlement programme brings with it new challenges for effective refugee integration, particularly because of the rapid expansion to local authorities which previously have not received resettled refugees. To put this in context, it took the Gateway Programme five years to expand from two authorities in 2004 to fifteen in 2009 and in that time Gateway assisted nearly 1,800 refugees across the UK. Even in the last five years to 2014, less than 4,000 Gateway and mandate refugees were resettled in the UK.

With the Syrian resettlement programme committed to bringing 20,000 Syrians to the UK by 2020, the number of resettled refugees is likely to increase to some 5,750 a year (including Gateway refugees). The Government has said that some 50 local authorities will be involved, but many of these will not have any previous experience of working with resettled refugees. Some will not have a significant ethnic minority population, let alone an existing refugee support infrastructure they can rely on.

Integration challenges may increase as a consequence of recent government legislation (e.g. right to rent, charging for healthcare, etc.) which is likely to have a chilling effect on refugees' ability to access services. In addition, the proposed 'safe return reviews' under which the Government will seek to return refugees to their country of origin when their temporary stay of protection comes to an end or if there is a clear improvement in conditions in their country will make it more difficult for refugees to get jobs and training as employers will know that they may be forced to leave and return home.

At the end of Q2 2015, just 61 local authorities (15%) were supporting more than 100 asylum seekers and 71% of local authorities received less than 6 asylum seekers or none at all. The

number of local authorities taking resettled refugees is similarly small and is likely to significantly overlap with those taking dispersed asylum seekers. Overtime refugees rarely move out of the area where they are initially settled, irrespective of how they arrive in the UK.

It is consequently vital that the Government takes note of the conclusions of the Home Office's previous research and makes the design and implementation of a comprehensive and properly funded refugee integration strategy for England a cross department priority, as is already the case in Scotland.

Details of research and conclusions relating to the effective integration of refugees

Home Office, Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration, March 2005

Introduction

The Home Office defines integration as taking place when refugees are empowered to: meet their responsibilities and achieve their full potential as members of British society, contribute to the community and access the services to which they are entitled. The Home Office notes that its integration strategy “applies equally to those who come through the asylum route or are brought to the UK through our resettlement programmes” and that “It is essential that we support refugees in realising their full potential – economically, culturally and in terms of social inclusion.”⁴

Indicators for achieving full potential are identified as: the employment rates of refugees; the levels of English language attainment over time; the number of refugees involved in voluntary work; the numbers of refugees in touch with community organisations; the proportion of refugees taking up British citizenship; and the proportion of refugees reporting harassment.⁵

The link between refugee integration and wider key departmental priorities such as building cohesion, tackling extremism and increasing community empowerment, is emphasised and the Home Office specifically states that a successful refugee integration strategy will help ensure that refugees “displacement and any trauma of migration are not exploited by those promoting radicalisation.”⁶

Challenges to integration identified by the Home Office

Language proficiency and access to the world of work are consistently found to be pivotal to the integration of refugees.⁷ Unemployment among refugees is estimated to be about six times the national average, despite the fact that refugees have, on average, higher levels of qualifications.⁸ The Department for Work and Pensions’ major research report: *Refugees’ Opportunities and Barriers in Employment and Training* (December 2002) found that:

- 56% of refugees had a qualification on arrival, of whom 23% had at least a degree
- On arrival in Britain, just 17% reported that they spoke English fluently or fairly well
- Refugee’s conditions of employment were notably worse than those experienced by ethnic minorities generally: 11% were earning less than the minimum wage
- Refugees had low levels of knowledge about statutory provision: just 54% of those looking for work had used the Jobcentre.⁹

⁴ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, pages 7-8

⁵ Home Office, Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration, March 2005, page 81

⁶ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, page 9

⁷ See also the two studies undertaken by Oxford University on behalf of the Home Office *Integration: Mapping the Field*, December 2002 and *Integration: Mapping the Field Volume II*, June 2003.

⁸ Home Office, Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration, March 2005, page 21

⁹ Home Office, Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration, March 2005, page 48

In 2004, the Home Office published *English Language Training for Refugees in London and the Regions*. Its key findings included that: the main barrier for refugees wanting to access ESOL is the shortage of classes and long waiting lists and that there is a lack of English-language teaching for professional or vocational development.¹⁰

In 2005, the Home Office concluded that in order to facilitate more effective integration, refugees needed:

- Clear documentation of their status provided quickly after their asylum determination
- Information about services and support available
- English-language classes, with flexibility of class times
- Relevant or UK-based work experience (including through volunteering)
- Information and structured routes for re-training and re-accreditation for those with practical or professional level skills, or those wishing to be self-employed
- Action to confront wider issues of discrimination and prejudice.¹¹

Integration solutions: Sunrise project, 2005-08

Based on the above findings the Government concluded that the “28-day period is of great importance in ensuring that most new refugees make a successful transition to life in the UK. The Government now intends to concentrate on this window as the critical period in its refugee integration strategy.”¹²

Consequently, in October 2005, it established Sunrise¹³ (Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services) through which a dedicated caseworker provided one-to-one intensive support to new refugees during the 28-day window and developed a Personal Integration Plan.

Sunrise was not intended to replace mainstream services, but rather to enable effective access to these services by refugees. The integration plan included advice on housing and accessing services; English-language tuition and training opportunities; and employment (including opportunities for volunteering and for being mentored). Caseworker support continued for up to a year after the initial decision.

This approach was complemented by Time Together, run by the charity TimeBank, which paired volunteer mentors with refugees for one year in order to facilitate their integration into UK society.¹⁴ By 2008, over 2,000 refugees had benefited from the project and independent evaluations concluded that Time Together had a positive impact on integration in terms of achieving potential, contributing to the community and accessing services.¹⁵

¹⁰ Home Office, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, March 2005, page 49

¹¹ Home Office, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, March 2005, page 22

¹² Home Office, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, March 2005, page 62

¹³ Sunrise was piloted in London, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Scotland and over three years it helped over 2,500 refugees.

¹⁴ Home Office, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, March 2005, page 67

¹⁵ UKBA, *Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees*, March 2009, page 11

In June 2007, UKBA launched the Integration Loan Scheme to provide loans so that refugees could undertake vocational training or put down a deposit for accommodation. By December 2008, it had assisted over 1,000 applicants with average loans of around £500. Of the loans granted, over 90% were used for housing, with the rest used for education and employment.¹⁶

The Home Office considered that the caseworker approach resolved potentially problematic issues, like housing, in good time after receipt of a positive asylum decision, thereby enabling refugees to focus on moving on with their lives and securing employment more quickly.¹⁷

It also concluded that funding should be redirected so that all new refugees receive a standard level of integration support wherever they live. Consequently, in April 2008, UKBA entered strategic funding arrangements with the British, Scottish and Welsh Refugee Councils.¹⁸

The success of the intensive one-to-one caseworker model and the Time Together mentoring project meant that these were established as key components of the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) which built on the achievements of Sunrise.

Integration solutions: Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) 2008-11

RIES began in October 2008. It provided practical help in the very early stages of integration with housing, education and benefits and then focussed on employment as a key driver to successful integration, with the aim to get 30% of refugees into work within a year.¹⁹

RIES consisted of: an advice and support service where a case manager worked with a refugee to agree and review integration goals; an employment advice service focused on achieving job readiness and sustained employment; and a mentoring service offering refugees the opportunity to be matched with a mentor. This support was available for a maximum of 12 months and delivered throughout the UK via 12 regional contracts to both the voluntary sector and local authorities (LA).

The Government also recognised that community “cohesion is something that can only be built locally”²⁰ and consequently provided funding to manage and support a network of Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships.

It also undertook to: develop Local Immigration Teams and provide a single point of contact for local communities to discuss the impacts of migration; strengthen engagement with refugee community organisations and to optimise their contribution; and work with other government departments, LAs and organisations to support all aspects of community cohesion, including preventing violent extremism.²¹

RIES provided support to 2,224 refugees by the end of September 2011. UKBA then decided to stop funding this service, despite the fact that the Home Office’s detailed research on new refugees clearly indicated the importance of these services in ensuring the effective integration of refugees.

¹⁶ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, page 11

¹⁷ Home Office, Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration, March 2005, page 21

¹⁸ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, page 14

¹⁹ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, page 18

²⁰ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, page 24

²¹ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government’s recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, page 30

The Survey on New Refugees, 2010

A survey was conducted between 2005 and 2009 in which those granted protection between 1 December 2005 and 25 March 2007 were sent four questionnaires by post after one week (first sweep), eight months (second sweep), 15 months (third sweep) and 21 months (final sweep). 5,678 refugees responded to the first sweep, falling to 1,840, 1,259 and 939 in subsequent sweeps.²²

New refugees typically described most changes in their employment, housing and English language skills within the first eight months after receiving their asylum decision. Support for refugees therefore needs to be most intensive during the early months following the asylum decision.²³

Health: Refugees had poorer health than the general population. At the time of the asylum decision, 64% of refugees described their health as very good or good, as compared with 74% of the general population of England (NHS Information Centre, 2008). At all time points of the survey around 12% of refugees described their health as bad or very bad, compared with 7% of the general population in England.

Unsurprisingly those in poor health were less likely to be employed than other refugees and made slower progress in English language skills. The healthcare needs of refugees may need to be addressed before other objectives, such as language learning and employment, can be achieved.²⁴

Language: Between the first and fourth sweep (21 months later) the proportion of refugees who reported a high level of English language ability increased from 26% to 38%. The proportion of refugees who reported a low level of English language ability decreased from 38% to 15%. The proportion of new refugees who reported not being able to read, speak, write or understand English fell from 11% to just 1% in the same period.²⁵

Good English language skills are integral to better integration, in particular increased entry of refugees into employment. At all time points refugees with higher English language skills were more likely to be employed than refugees with lower language skills. The survey provided evidence that participation in language training was linked to an improvement in English language skills over time.

Refugee service providers should continue to promote participation in language courses at the earliest opportunity. Women and older refugees may need additional support to improve their English language skills and find employment.²⁶

²² Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, page 2

²³ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, page iii

²⁴ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, pages 7 & ii

²⁵ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, page 3

²⁶ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, page ii

Employment: Overall, employment rates increased from 34% at eight months to 49% at 21 months. The greatest increase was seen in the proportion of refugees in full-time employment, which increased from 22% to 33%. Although employment increased over time, they remained below the average employment rate of 80% for the UK population (Office for National Statistics, 2009a). At all time points men were more than twice as likely as women to be employed: at 21 months, 61% of men were employed compared with 24% of women.²⁷

The largest proportion of employed refugees worked in low-skilled elementary occupations. Over one-third of refugees worked in these types of jobs at all time points, compared with 12% of the UK workforce (Office for National Statistics, 2008a). Only 7% of refugees worked in managerial or professional occupations, compared with 28% of the UK workforce. At least one-half of new refugees who had been in professional or skilled occupations in their home country held positions in the UK that were below this level. Unsurprisingly, more than half of new refugees who were employed felt that they were overqualified for their jobs.

Over the same period, the proportion of refugees who were unemployed and looking for work fell from 23% to 12%. Unemployed refugees tended to engage in a high level of job search activity. In between each sweep, refugees who were looking for a job applied on average for 21 to 26 positions and were invited to three to four job interviews.²⁸

Housing and homelessness: Within the first eight months after the asylum decision three-quarters of new refugees moved home. Over time, refugees rarely moved out of the area where they had initially settled. New refugees typically rented their accommodation. At sweep 4, 51% of new refugees rented from a local authority or housing association and 27% rented in the private sector.²⁹

A small proportion (4%) of refugees who participated in all four sweeps of the survey had lived on the streets at some point between the baseline and the 21-month follow-up and a further 8% had lived in a homeless shelter at some point. This is likely to underestimate the true proportion of refugees who experience homelessness since the survey was based on a postal questionnaire, which required a fixed address. Support covering the transition to more permanent housing may provide a more stable environment and reduce the risk of homelessness among refugees.³⁰

An evaluation of the Gateway Protection Programme, 2009

Gateway refugees were given cultural orientation by the IOM, on behalf of the Home Office, before coming to the UK. When they arrived they entered a specialised 12-month programme of support for integration into their new lives in the UK via a Home Office appointed lead agency in that area (e.g. Refugee Action, Refugee Council or a local authority asylum team).

²⁷ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, pages 4 & 13

²⁸ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, pages 12 & 14

²⁹ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, pages 4 and 15

³⁰ Home Office Spotlight on refugee integration: findings from the Survey on New Refugees in the UK, Research Report 37, July 2010, page 16

The lead agency provides practical orientation on arrival, co-ordinates and facilitates access to housing and services, and provides tailored caseworker support for a 12-month period, including exit strategies and referrals to other agencies for those in need of further support after 12 months.

The Gateway Programme grew from two authorities in 2004 to fifteen across the UK in 2009 and in that time provided permanent protection to nearly 1,800 refugees.³¹ Immigration Research and Statistics (IRS) studied the first two groups to arrive under Gateway in 2004 in Sheffield (35) and Bolton (44) and two groups who arrived in 2006 in Hull (23) and Rochdale (27). Half were from Liberia and half from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Data was collected up to 18 months after resettlement with the first two groups, and once, at ten months after resettlement, with the later two groups. The research findings are summarised below.

Employment: By 18 months, Jobcentre Plus in Bolton had directed many Gateway refugees to a generally well-received, and intensive (up to 26 weeks study, 5 days per week) course of ESOL plus basic numeracy, literacy, and IT skills.³²

By 18 months, volunteering experience had been gained by between one-fifth and one-third of each group, mostly with refugee community organisations. Women with children were least likely to have volunteered. Setting up volunteering opportunities, particularly outside the voluntary sector, is challenging and resource intensive.³³

By 18 months, between one-eighth and two-fifths of each group had worked at some point since resettlement but few had found sustained employment. Almost all employment found by refugees was in temporary, low-skill, low-paid jobs, and was mostly found through agencies. At ten months, in Hull, one-quarter of the men reported having had paid work experience in the UK; only one of these was employed at the time of the research.³⁴

Employment rates were highest in Rochdale, apparently due to caseworkers approaching all the employment agencies in the area outlining their refugees' skill profile and asking for them to be considered for employment.³⁵ Many women wanted to work but were far less likely than men to have done so. Across the groups, the principle barriers to employment were:

- English language skills (four-fifths in Hull and Rochdale, one-quarter in Bolton);
- Lack of UK work experience, recognised qualifications or references (half in Bolton, Hull and Rochdale);
- Discrimination (one-tenth in Bolton, one-quarter in Hull, no-one in Rochdale);

Social contact with wider society: Friendships with other Gateway refugees were generally central to social networks and places of worship were the most frequently mentioned social link with the wider community. The lead agency caseworkers was also a pivotal source of support. Education, paid work and volunteering are potential bridges to the wider community, but few of the refugees in the study were in work or involved in volunteering, particularly beyond the refugee community.

³¹ UKBA, Moving on Together: Government's recommitment to supporting refugees, March 2009, page 12

³² Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009, p.6

³³ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009, p.10

³⁴ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009, p.29

³⁵ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009, p.9

Across the groups, at all interview points, refugees remained overwhelmingly grateful that they had been helped to resettle in the UK and planned to stay. Between 25-40% of households had made Family Reunion applications. In Hull and Rochdale at 10 months and Bolton at 18 months, most refugees said they wanted to stay in their resettlement area over the next 12 months.³⁶ Peace, safety and stability were central to refugees' satisfaction with their UK lives.

Between 25-50% of each group experienced either verbal or physical harassment. Incidence was highest in Bolton where just over half of the respondents reported experiencing some form of harassment (e.g. vandalism, littering gardens and front doors and racist name-calling), often by children or teenagers. Encouragingly, at 18 months, 23 out of the 25 who said they had been victims of harassment had reported this to someone and 15 had reported the incidents to the police.

Another seven of the Bolton refugees had experienced other types of individual victimisation, including violent assault. By 18 months, four families reported having moved house in order to escape harassment, and there were others who hoped to do so. In Hull and Rochdale, at ten months, almost one-sixth of each group had experienced a physical attack and more than a quarter had been verbally attacked.³⁷ Parents reported that 16 out of 31 children aged five years or over had experienced harassment.

Housing: Housing in the resettlement area was arranged, and quality assured, by lead agencies and provided in partnership with housing associations and local authorities. While many still hoped to move house, at ten months in Hull and Rochdale, and 18 months in Bolton, at least two-thirds of refugees were satisfied with their homes.³⁸

Healthcare: Lead agencies helped refugees to register with GPs, arranged interpretation and supported refugees in making and attending their initial appointments. Consequently, all refugees were registered with GPs within a short time of arrival. Between half and two-thirds of the Bolton, Hull and Rochdale groups reported some physical health problems. In Hull and Rochdale more than half reported having been at least slightly bothered by "emotional problems".³⁹

Conclusions

Progress towards integration was apparent. At the time of the final interview all participants were accessing services; most had formed social bonds through places of worship and community groups and some were gradually building relationships through education, volunteering, contact with neighbours and, occasionally, employment.

The research concluded that a cornerstone of Gateway's success was the integration package received by new arrivals during their first year in the UK and the role of the lead agency caseworkers. The caseworkers were able to deal with urgent needs on arrival and then assist

³⁶ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009, p.14

³⁷ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009, p.15

³⁸ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, Research Report 12, February 2009, p.5

³⁹ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, February 2009, pages 10 & 11

refugees in accessing local services, advise them about their rights and responsibilities, and help them with accessing English courses, re-accreditation, re-training and job-seeking.⁴⁰

While progress was being made against indicators of integration, the biggest concern for refugees and service providers was the slow rate of progress with English language skills and employment. Poor English skills were generally seen as the most important and enduring barrier to progress as judged on all other indicators of integration. English skills, references, recognition of qualifications and experience, lack of qualifications and UK experience were considered the primary barriers to jobs and why employment rates remained low over time.⁴¹

Married women with children were making slowest progress. Young adults were making best progress as education gave them a route into society. There was evidence of growing desperation and frustration among those left unemployed, this was most marked among men. Lone adults appeared especially vulnerable and close monitoring and repeated ‘signposting’ to sources of social support or mental healthcare may help. Special consideration might be given to Family Reunion requests for such cases.

The research suggested strategies that might improve integration of Gateway refugees.

- Facilitating more English language training, other education, and training towards employment in the early days may optimise long-term integration.
- Additional strategies are needed to improve employment prospects. Partners in Gateway delivery could broker employment or work-relevant volunteering.
- Integration strategies for specific sub-groups (e.g. mothers, lone adults, and children) could be developed.⁴²

Insights into integration pathways in Scotland, year two (1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015) of the Holistic Integration Service (HIS), June 2015.

92.5% of new refugees who engaged with HIS (816 people) presented as homeless to their local authority following cessation of their asylum support. Costs of temporary accommodation in B&Bs is too much for many asylum seekers.

95.5% of new refugees who engaged with HIS (844 people) received support from HIS to make their first benefit claim

New refugees receive their first benefit payment on average 42-50 days after they received status, resulting in 14-18 days of destitution.

Many new refugees do not receive a National Insurance Number with their status documents and adult dependants never receive the number when they are granted status.

39.5 % of beneficiaries required extensive advocacy support from their advisor to get a national Insurance number allocated.

⁴⁰ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, February 2009, pages 19-22.

⁴¹ Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, February 2009, page 18

⁴² Home Office, The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation, February 2009, page i

91% of sanctions reported for non-compliance (31 people) happened within the first 6 months of being granted status and 65% were beginners in English (88% claimed Job Seekers Allowance). For example, the mandatory provision of ESOL for the English Language Requirement through one provider meant that some refugees who were already attending classes were sanctioned because they didn't attend the mandatory DWP provided classes.

64% of beneficiaries had Access 2 level or below – not able to hold a basic conversation on a topic they were not familiar with or write a simple text. 71 % of new refugees arrive with no education beyond secondary school.

7% of refugees who engaged with HIS since May 2013 (48 people) gained paid employment within eight months of receiving status.

27% of HIS beneficiaries reported they suffered from a diagnosed mental or physical health problem with a further 5% having health issues mentioned on their case notes. Therefore a total of 34% reported health problems.