

Framework for Action on Employment and Skills for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Yorkshire and the Humber

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. STRATEGIC PURPOSE	7
3. OUTCOMES.....	8
4. THE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION	10
5. MEASURES of SUCCESS.....	21
6. DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIPS	23
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	29
8. CONSULTEES	30
9. RISK ASSESSMENT	32

1. INTRODUCTION

Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Yorkshire and the Humber are faced with many obstacles to full integration. It is arguably those that prevent them from fully engaging in employment and learning opportunities that are the most detrimental. Tackling those obstacles is now widely recognised as the key to minimising further problems and to unlocking refugees' and asylum seekers' full potential.

Low standards of refugees' English language proficiency on the one hand, and a systemic failure to recognise the value of refugees' existing qualifications by the employment and skills systems mean that many refugees in the region are unemployed or under-employed. Lack of UK work experience is a fundamental problem. Cultural barriers (especially for women), direct and indirect labour market discrimination, a lack of understanding of the labour market¹ and exploitation in the workplace² exacerbate the problem.

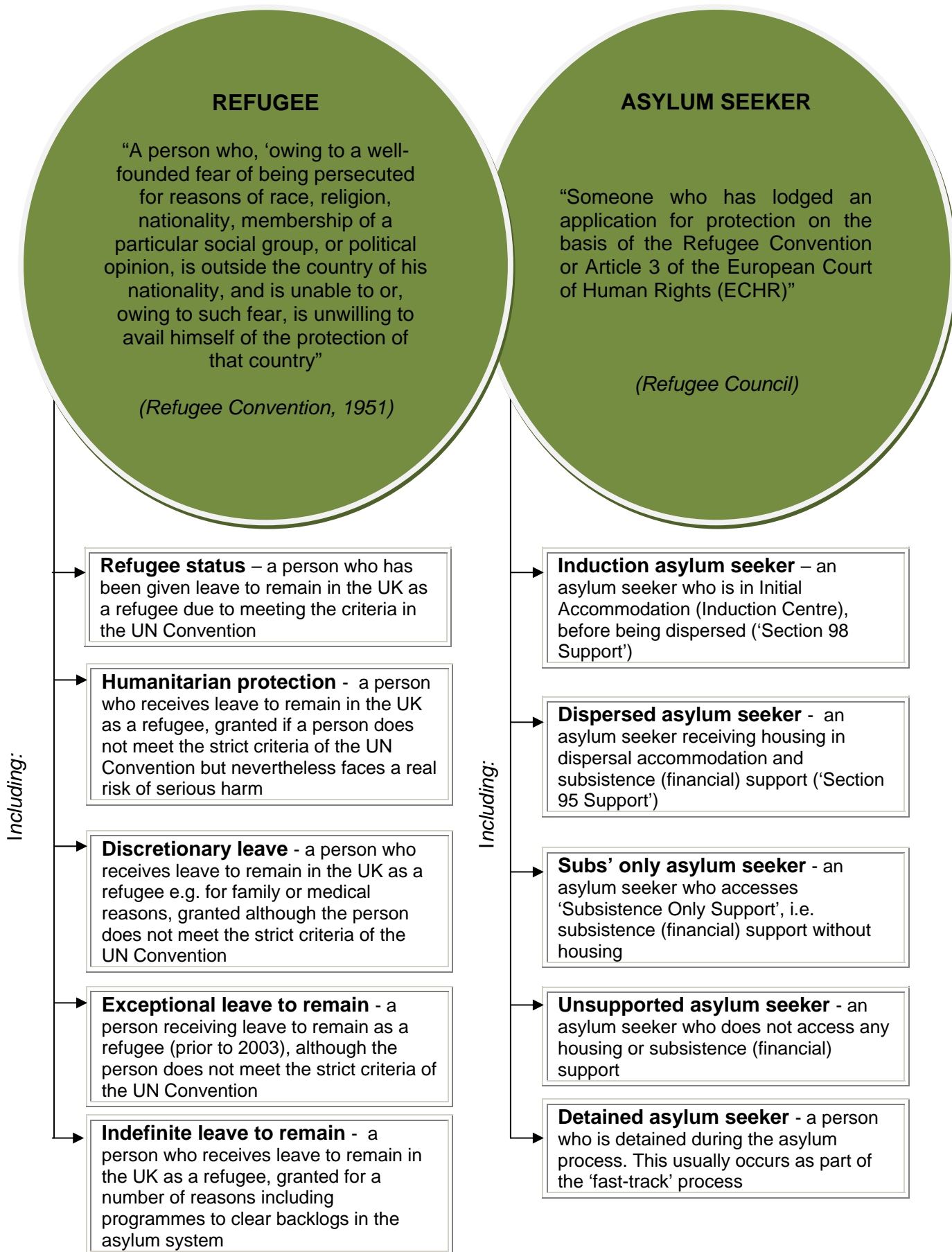
Definitions

A detailed explanation of the definitions of 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' to be used in this work can be found overleaf.

Whilst refugees and asylum seekers are affected by many similar issues, asylum seekers face the additional, currently insurmountable, barrier; that they are not allowed to work under most circumstances. As such, some of their needs are more acute. Another key challenge is the difficulty of transition from asylum seeker to refugee status. Supporting asylum seekers through this process is dependent on an open dialogue and joint approach to issue resolution between a variety of bodies, including Jobcentre Plus, the Refugee Integration and Employment Service, several third sector organisations and dedicated individuals.

¹ Including unfamiliarity with the system, selection and recruitment difficulties

² e.g. confiscation of passports, wage deductions and below-minimum wages, informal working



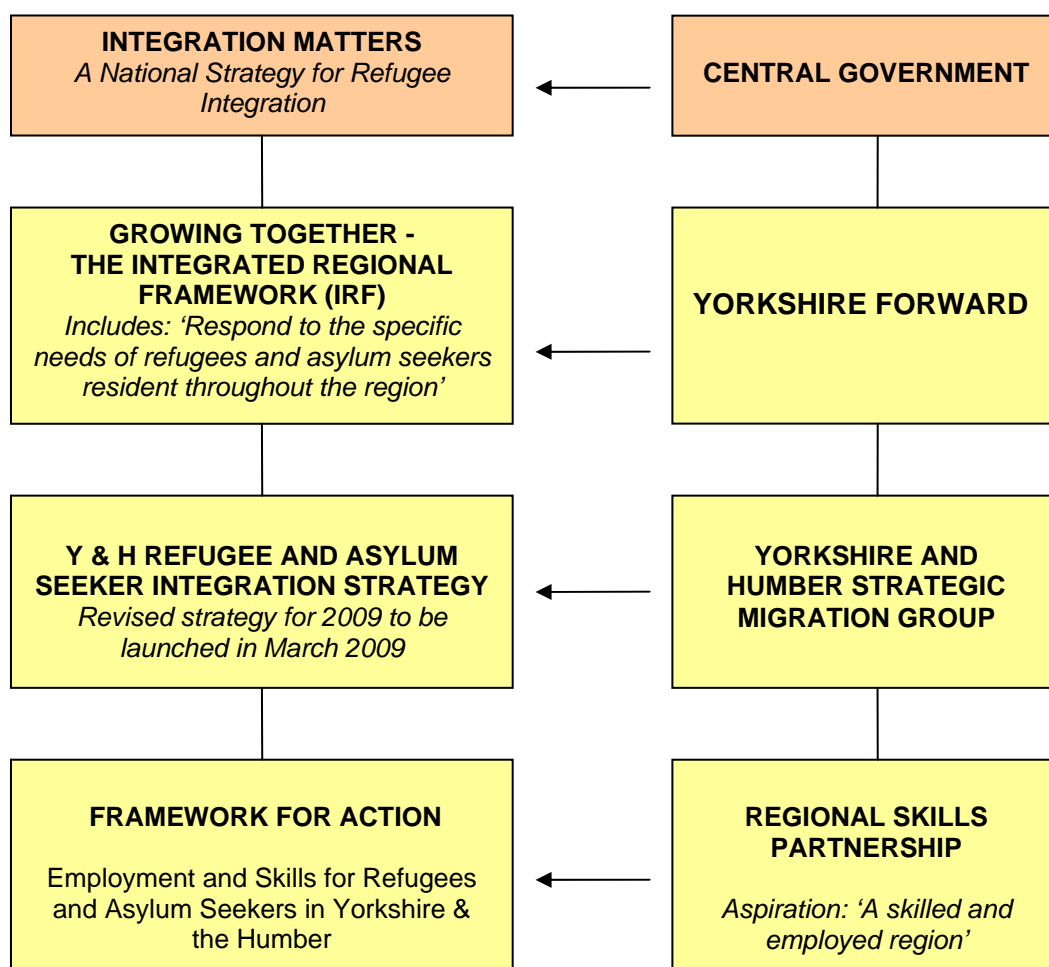
Unless otherwise stated, all definitions are derived from ‘Who are migrants?’, a document produced by Dave Brown on behalf of the Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Migration Partnership, 2008

Strategic Alignment

Integration Matters (the National Strategy for Refugee Integration)³ requires that refugees are allowed to achieve their full potential and to contribute to their region’s economy, their local communities and to the organisations within which they work. Achieving these goals in the region relies on ensuring:

- the provision of accessible and suitable information;
- sustainable service provision (including opportunities for language training, work experience, retraining and re-accreditation);
- access to accurate knowledge;
- effective communication; and
- effective engagement with, and partnership working between, a range of local stakeholders, including service providers, brokers and employers.

This Framework will contribute directly to the delivery of the national strategy, as shown:



³ 'Integration Matters', Home Office (2005) (Note that, at the time of writing the strategy is under review)

The Employment and Skills Context

Accessing appropriate English language provision, e.g. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS); is a key issue for refugees (and asylum seekers, who are entitled to ESOL provision if their application for refugee status has not been completely processed after six months). It is crucial that refugees are able to access employment-oriented provision quickly and easily. Funding arrangements, both long and short term, must support the full range of provision that is required by learners⁴. Whilst there will doubtless be numerous changes in the Education and Skills system over the next few years, which will have an impact on outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers, the Learning and Skills Council's responsibility for funding ESOL provision makes it essential that this function is preserved within the remit of the successor bodies to the LSC.

Building on the success of the former 'Strategic Upgrade of the Refugee Integration Services' programme (SUNRISE), the new Home Office funded Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) now forms the central plank of refugee integration. It has a strategic and developmental role. Available to refugees over the age of 18⁵, RIES provides new refugees with: referral to a personal case manager; an individual integration plan; immediate advice and support to address critical needs; an employment advice service; and a mentoring service. Leeds City Council have been contracted to deliver RIES in Yorkshire and the Humber.

One area that has perhaps been previously overlooked is the importance of access to Higher Education for Refugees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that exposure to Higher Education in the UK (e.g. HE mentoring) has helped refugees with HE level qualifications obtain jobs at levels more commensurate with their prior education and work experience. However, barriers such as admissions policies/ documentation that are incompatible with refugee's previous experience and a lack of support, prevent refugees engaging with HE. As such, both Higher and Further Education should be encouraged to become active partners in developing the skills of refugees.

The Framework

Refugees and Asylum Seekers exist at the core of this Framework. A range of dedicated service deliverers, partnerships, networks and strategic groups are already working hard to address the employment and skills needs of this population in the region, and have been involved in a consultation process leading to this final iteration of the Framework. The Framework's implications and requirements for engagement reach far wider, however. Ownership of the framework must not be limited to Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the strategic groups/service deliverers who work with them, but must include businesses/ organisations, local employers and the wider community as a whole⁶.

This document presents the Framework itself. The Framework is solely concerned with employment opportunities and supporting skills development. It promotes the use of effective and efficient processes to deliver a smooth pathway from point of arrival to full integration. It must demonstrate how best to capitalise on this unique opportunity to the advantage of asylum seekers and refugees, and to the benefit of the region as a whole.

⁴ See also NIACE's 2006 inquiry into ESOL – 'More than a language'

⁵ and those who have been granted humanitarian protection following a claim handled by a asylum team in one of the regions

⁶ A list of contributors to the Framework, representative of the majority of stakeholder groups, is given in Section 9.

2. STRATEGIC PURPOSE

The key challenge that the Framework for Action must meet is to guarantee the provision of opportunities for all asylum seekers and refugees to achieve their full potential.

Accordingly, the strategic purpose of the Framework for Action is to:

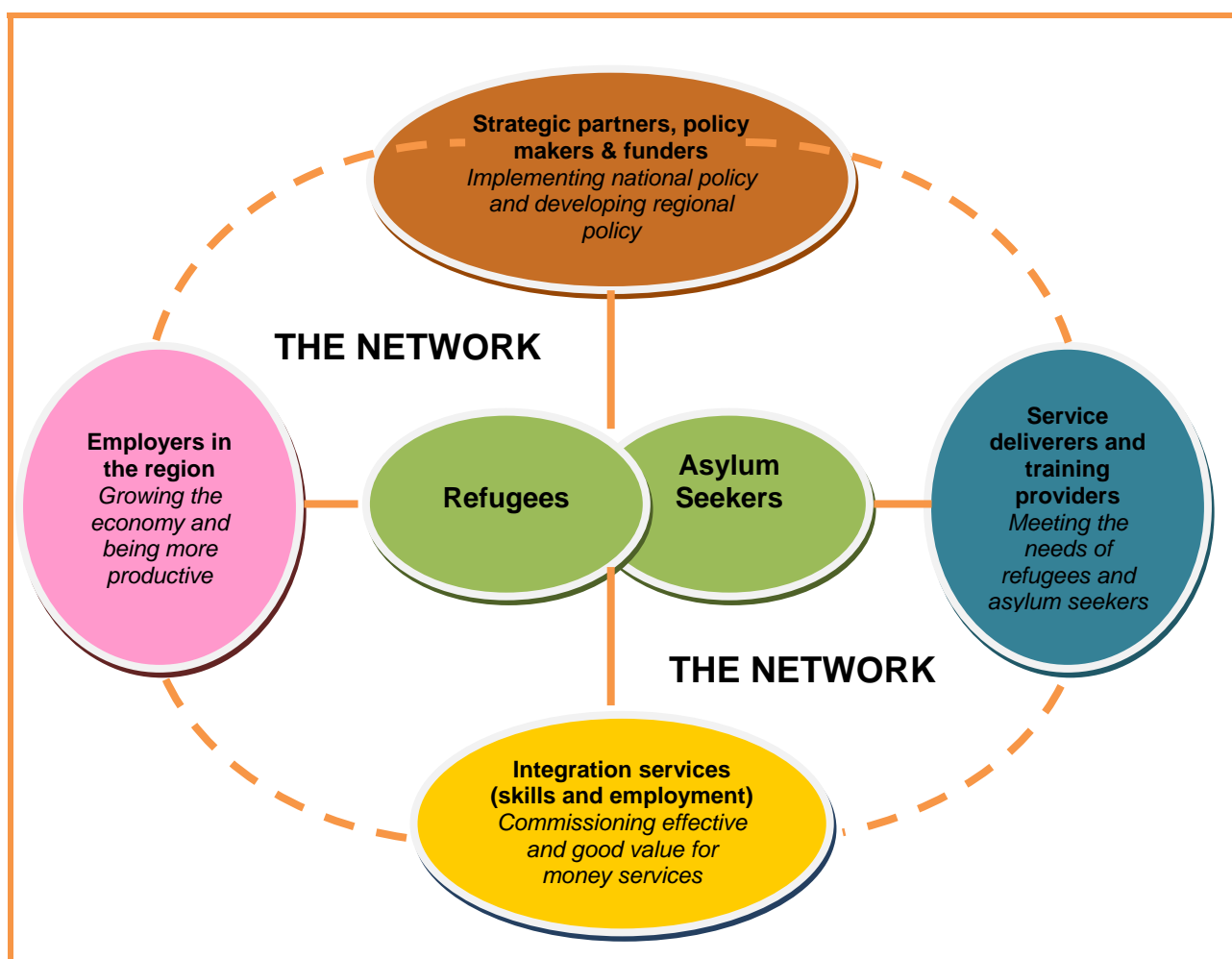
- ensure equality of opportunity in employment and skills development;
- enable individuals to realise their full skills potential;
- ensure that the skills and talents of refugees bring recognised benefits to the organisations within which they work, to the communities in which they live, and to the region's economy;
- secure employers' commitment to employing refugees and supporting asylum seekers;
- coordinate and influence the allocation of Yorkshire and the Humber's public, private and third sector resources;
- provide optimum levels of support for asylum seekers and refugees.

The Framework is intended to be relevant at all stages of asylum seekers' and refugees' development and integration within the region – from the time of arrival to the time of full and effective integration.

3. OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the implementation of the Framework will of course be firmly focused on refugees and asylum seekers. However, outcomes will also accrue to the network of organisations involved in delivering the Framework. The relationships are illustrated in the Network Diagram.

Network Diagram



Outcomes by category of organisation

The headlines in the tables that follow record the intended 'beneficiaries' and the items from the Framework's strategic purpose that are relevant to them. The main table then lists the intended outcomes; summarises the actions required to achieve the outcomes; and identifies the partners that are (or in some cases, may be) responsible for carrying out the actions.

A glossary, primarily of acronyms, is given overleaf.

Glossary

APEL	Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (provides students with the opportunity to have prior learning accredited as part of their current course)
BITC	Business in the Community
CAB	Citizen's Advice Bureau
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
Employability Skills Programme	The LSC/JCP Employability Skills Programme offers Jobcentre Plus customers a programme that recognises their different backgrounds, needs and goals and helps them to enhance their employability skills, literacy, numeracy, language skills etc.
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LSC&SO	The Learning and Skills Council (and successor organisation/s)
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NRP	National Reference Point
Nextstep service	A national service funded by the LSC, offering information and advice about learning and work for adults aged 20+
One stop	Refugee Council service offering free advice and information. This service is delivered in Yorkshire and the Humber through the Leeds Refugee Council office
RETAS	Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service, Leeds
RIES	The Refugee Integration and Employment Service
RNAP	The Refugee New Arrivals Programme
RSP	The Regional Skills Partnership
VAS	Voluntary Action Sheffield
YHRMP	The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Migration Partnership

Note that **outcomes** are considered to be anything that occurs as a direct consequence of the application of the Framework.

4. THE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

<h1>Refugees</h1>	<p><i>“Ensure equality of opportunity in employment and skills development”</i></p> <p><i>“Enable individuals to realise their full skills potential”</i></p>
-------------------	---

Outcomes		Actions to achieve the outcomes	Responsible partners
R1	Easier access to better information, advice and guidance	i. Help refugees to get UK work experience e.g. an increase in job placement and Work Trial ⁷ opportunities;	JCP, RIES delivery partners and RNAP
		ii. Deliver specific and responsive support to help refugees understand how to apply for, and secure a job suited to their prior experience	JCP, RIES delivery partners
		iii. Put in place appropriate enterprise support	Yorkshire Forward, Business Link Yorkshire
		iv. Make sufficient information, diagnostic services and guidance available	JCP, RIES partners, The Refugee Council’s One Stop Service (Y&H Office in Leeds), The Nextstep service, NARIC/ NRP ⁸

⁷ Work Trial (JCP) is a 14-day voluntary trial in an actual job vacancy with an employer

⁸ Organisations that advise on parity of qualifications

R2	More refugees entering sustainable employment	v. Fully achieve RIES targets for getting new refugees into employment	RIES delivery partners
		vi. More opportunities for work experience for refugees ⁹	Employers
R3	More refugees employed to their full potential, commensurate with their skills and abilities	vii. Work with employers and service deliverers (e.g. Jobcentre Plus Advisers) to identify and recruit at appropriate skills levels to tackle underemployment	JCP, RIES delivery partners, Train to Gain/ brokers (and employer support)
		viii. Ensure that refugees applying to University are supported into higher education and achieve qualifications that will ultimately help them secure higher-level skilled employment in the region	HEIs
R4	Adequate availability of needed access to learning / training and progression opportunities at all levels	ix. Provide flexible access to learning and appropriate support (from level 1 to FE/ HE) and APEL initiatives	All learning providers (HE and FE ¹⁰ , APEL providers, Learning providers, the Y&H Open College Network, LSC&SO and JCP - Employability Skills Programme)
		x. Consider creating an HE Scoping (task and finish) group to share good practice and jointly address barriers of access to HE	HEIs / Yorkshire Universities

⁹ Our research suggests that UK work experience is very important for refugees, especially those with professional backgrounds

¹⁰ Further and higher education may be able to help refugees obtain jobs at levels commensurate with their 'at home' education and work experience

R5	Suitable levels of English language skills among refugees to enable them to enter employment	xi. Obtain or develop an accurate position statement on ESOL and IELTS provision in the region; identify any service delivery gaps; and then maintain or improve unrestricted access to ESOL/ IELTS for refugees	Y&H partnership, RSP, LSC&SO for funding, The Nextstep service
		xii. Focus on all requisite levels of need (e.g. basic; technical)	Providers, LSC&SO for funding, LSC&SO (Train to Gain), brokers, The Nextstep service
		xiii. Make employers more aware of language training provision and eligibilities so they can offer them to refugees within their workforce	LSC, JCP, third sector partners, employers' organisations
R6	Increased number of businesses start-ups among refugees	xiv. Ensure full and effective integration of services to refugees in Business Link provision	Business Link

Asylum seekers	<i>“Provide optimum levels of support for asylum seekers”</i>
-----------------------	---

Outcomes		Approach to achieve the outcomes	Responsible partners
A1	Increased awareness of, and access to, opportunities for volunteering in the Yorkshire and the Humber region	i. Promote volunteering for asylum seekers as a step towards employment (from the time of landing)	Local Voluntary Action or CVS groups, BITC
A2	An increased proportion of asylum seekers benefiting from volunteering opportunities	ii. Review balance of supply/demand for host organisations; act on the findings	Local Voluntary Action or CVS groups
A3	English language learning and other further education	iii. Volunteer teaching of English language	Third sector, Local Voluntary Action or CVS groups
		iv. Sufficient ESOL and other FE provision for asylum seekers ¹¹	LSC&SO for funding after 6 months, learning providers
A4	An accurate record of achievement for the individual that demonstrates skills acquired ¹² or demonstrated during the period of volunteering (that will ultimately support their entry to the labour market if granted refugee status)	v. Develop a record for asylum seekers to use to document their attributes and the skills developed through volunteering	FE, community providers, The Nextstep service

¹¹ Asylum Seekers are entitled to ESOL provision, where their application for refugee status has not been completely processed after 6 months

¹² One example of legally sanctioned skills acquisition by asylum seekers might be English language skills delivered by the Third Sector

A5	An increased proportion of asylum seekers benefiting from opportunities for social integration	vi. Sufficient provision of social integration activities for asylum seekers, e.g. through libraries, mother and toddler groups and conversation clubs	Third sector and public sector partners, Local Voluntary Action or CVS groups
		vii. Raise awareness of social integration opportunities	Refugee Council One Stop Service, Third sector organisations, Local Voluntary Action or CVS groups
A6	Easier access to better information, advice and guidance	viii. Make sufficient information, diagnostic services and guidance available	Refugee Council, The One Stop Service (Refugee Council, Leeds)

<h1>Employers</h1>	<p><i>“Ensure that the skills and talents of refugees bring recognised benefits to the organisations within which they work”</i></p> <p><i>“Secure employers’ commitment to employing refugees and supporting asylum seekers”</i></p>
--------------------	---

Outcomes		Approach to achieve the outcomes	Responsible partners
B1:	Recruitment of skilled and talented individuals that will bring economic benefits to their organisation in terms of a positive work ethic and levels of productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Raise awareness of advisors ii. Promote employment of refugees in occupations at appropriate levels 	JCP, RETAS, Y&H partnership, RIES, RAMWESS, LSC&SO (Train to Gain), brokers
B2:	Increased confidence, and knowledge of how to employ refugees and integrate them successfully into their workforce (including work trials, work experience and placement opportunities)	iii. Identify what information, advice and guidance support would be most valued by employers who we believe to be confused, concerned or largely un-educated in respect of employing refugees through research / canvassing by RAMWESS partners and key service deliverers.	JCP, YHRMP, SSCs and Business Link, The Nextstep service, BITC, RAMWESS, RIES
		iv. Bring employers face to face with potential refugee employees ('meet your potential workforce' style events aimed at increasing the number of Work Trials, placements leading to full employment for the client group).	JCP, RETAS, RAMWESS, RIES, BITC, SSCs, LSC&SO and JCP (Employability Skills Programme)

		<p>v. Provide resources (already available from service deliverers) that will help them understand how best to recruit refugees¹³</p>	<p>RIES delivery partners, LSC (Train to Gain), the Nextstep service</p>
		<p>vi. Implement UKBA's preventing illegal working regime/guidance, which clarifies issues around required documentation, etc.</p>	<p>Employers, UKBA, RAMWESS, RIES, BITC</p>
<p>B3:</p>	<p>Employers view recruitment of refugees as an opportunity as well as a social responsibility</p>	<p>vii. Encourage employers to share information / their experience of successfully employing refugees and the impact they have had on their organisation</p>	<p>RIES delivery partners, JCP, WYEC, SYEC (and other employer coalitions) BITC</p>
		<p>viii. Ensure that employers have access to employer champions and information about further training and development opportunities relevant to refugees they employ (e.g. clarity about ESOL offer, provision and costs for organisations)</p>	<p>JCP, all third sector agencies, RIES delivery partners, Learndirect, The Nextstep service, Train to Gain brokers, RAMWESS</p>
		<p>ix. Develop a co-ordinated employer engagement campaign.</p>	<p>A Y&H partnership, JCP, LSC&SO, RIES delivery partners, LSC&SO (Train to Gain), RAMWESS</p>

¹³ For example: RETAS provides information for employers on their 'Refugees at Work' website section and are currently creating a DVD and pack to work alongside employers in the hope that they will give refugees the opportunity to be placed, mentored and or employed.

Service deliverers	<i>“Provide optimum levels of support for asylum seekers and refugees”</i>
---------------------------	--

Outcomes		Approach to achieve the outcomes	Responsible partners
SD1:	Contracts placed with the most appropriate providers	i. Providers master the competitive tendering process/ provider selection informed by strong evidence of need and of provider capability	Providers, JCP, LSC&SO
SD2:	Better information available and improved signposting and referral services between agencies	ii. Map provision of services, linkage between services, and gaps in provision	YHRMP
		iii. Determine the best way to maintain current relevant information	RSP or IAG prime contractor Business Link, LSC&SO (Train to Gain)
SD3:	More opportunities to engage with organisations / employers in the region known to have an interest in, or experience of, recruiting refugees or offering work placement opportunities	iv. Link in to the wider employer engagement campaign proposed (see B3 vii)	Providers, RAMWESS, BITC, Yorkshire Forward
SD4:	Benefit from better partnership working and coordination	v. Identify, and disseminate information on, sustainable funding and other resources	Partnership coordinating DWP; JCP; LSC, Local Voluntary Action or CVS groups, Learndirect (databases), The Nextstep service

		<p>vi. Partners ensure that their front-line personnel are aware of all services available to the client group</p>	<p>All partners The Nextstep service, Learndirect advice line, LSC&SO (Train to Gain)</p>
		<p>vii. Explore the need to establish a Higher Education working group that can identify what support is most appropriate for refugees including: employability skills; study skills; mentoring; and support to refugees with their University application process</p>	<p>HEIs, Yorkshire Universities</p>

<h2>Strategic partners</h2>	<p><i>“Coordinate and influence the allocation of Yorkshire and the Humber’s private, public and third sector resources**”</i></p> <p><i>“Ensure that the skills and talents of refugees bring recognised benefits to the communities in which they live, and to the region’s economy”</i></p>
-----------------------------	--

Outcomes		Approach to achieve the outcomes	Responsible partners
P1:	Increased confidence on how, and where, to target resources most effectively to benefit refugees and asylum seekers in the Yorkshire and the Humber region	i. Identify data and intelligence gaps required to increase ability to target / refine investment priorities (linked to action P2)	YHRMP
		ii. Establish a baseline position in terms of current resources in place to support refugees and asylum seekers in the region	YHRMP, RSP
P2:	A robust evidence base (data and intelligence) that will assist with influencing national and regional policy in respect of the client groups	iii. Conduct a feasibility study into the potential for data, intelligence and skills audit research and reporting	YHRMP, RSP Yorkshire Futures and/ or LSC&SO
P3:	Strong leadership for this agenda in the region,	iv. Invite the Director of the Regional Skills Partnership to accept the role of leader and ‘regional champion’ for the refugee and asylum seeker skills and employment agenda in Yorkshire and the Humber	YHRMP, RSP

		v. Include this agenda in regional and local strategies and plans	YHRMP
P4:	Agreed accountability and strong governance for the delivery of this Framework for Action in Yorkshire and the Humber region	vi. Identify partners, leaders and accountable bodies and individuals in respect of this Framework	YHRMP
		vii. Agree monitoring and evaluation procedures for measuring the impact and strategic added value of the implementation of this Framework for Action	RSP

5. MEASURES of SUCCESS

The measures of success that are considered to be appropriate for this Framework are as follows.

1. The successful appointment of a skills and employment champion at Y&H Strategic Migration Group (SMG) level.

2. The successful development of a task and finish group that will achieve the following between October 2008 and April 2009:
 - Dissemination of this Framework to all relevant partners in the 'network';
 - Delivery of a regional conference event to embed an understanding of the Framework amongst partners in the network;
 - Reference to this Framework for Action in all relevant regional and local strategies and plans including, for example, the Regional Integration Strategy; the SMG Business Plan 2009-2010 and local authority plans;
 - The development of capacity (skills and knowledge) within the network enabling strategic partners and service deliverers to better meet the skills and employment needs of refugees and asylum seekers in future (i.e. CPD, seminar and training opportunities to learn more about the client group, good practice and the sharing of learning opportunities), including Nextstep, Learndirect, strategic and operational managers, and front line staff;
 - A clear audit of resources (current and future) available to support the implementation of this Framework for Action (a key theme for the proposed conference event above).

3. Partner satisfaction with the following partnership activities:
 - Outcomes attributable to the partnership
 - Collaboration and collaborative activities (delivery)
 - Leadership
 - Administration
 - Governance

4. Further, it is suggested that an appropriately representative group should investigate the feasibility of a monitoring and evaluation system for ensuring the long-term successful implementation of this Framework. This should give due consideration as to how best to collect skills and employment data about the client group between 2008 and 2011. As part of this work the Group should consider the opportunities and difficulties associated with measuring:
- Proportion of refugees in sustainable employment;
 - Proportion of refugees reporting satisfaction with the nature and level of work they are engaged in;
 - Proportion of refugees aware of learning opportunities that will address barriers;
 - Proportion of refugees participating in learning to overcome barriers;
 - English language skills amongst refugees
 - Proportion of asylum seekers aware of volunteering opportunities;
 - Proportion of asylum seekers participating in volunteering;
 - Proportion of former asylum seekers using their record of achievement in job hunting;
 - Number of organisations providing work placements;
 - Number of organisations employing refugees;
 - Availability of sufficient exemplar organisations.

Recommendations concerning the nature and roles of groups are given in the next section.

6. DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIPS

One of the central considerations in developing the Framework has been to identify the best 'home' for it, and to clarify how the various strands of skills and employment activity targeted at refugees and asylum seekers can be co-ordinated successfully across the region. This has involved detailed discussions around:

- Who should 'own' the Framework and whether this should be a single organisation, a group of organisations and / or a committee or existing sub-group such as RAMWESS;
- How the Framework for Action can achieve a higher profile and be embedded in all relevant regional and local strategic plans;
- Who should be accountable for the successful implementation of the Framework for Action so that its impact and outcomes in the region can be monitored and measured;
- Which organisations and individuals need to be involved in any partnership required to ensure the practical delivery of the Framework for Action from 2008 onwards;
- The lifespan of the Framework for Action.

A broad consensus was reached on the 28th of July at one of the working group events facilitated by Skills Strategy Research as part of this study. The consensus is summarised in the recommendations that follow.

Recommendation 1: Strategic Migration Group Representation

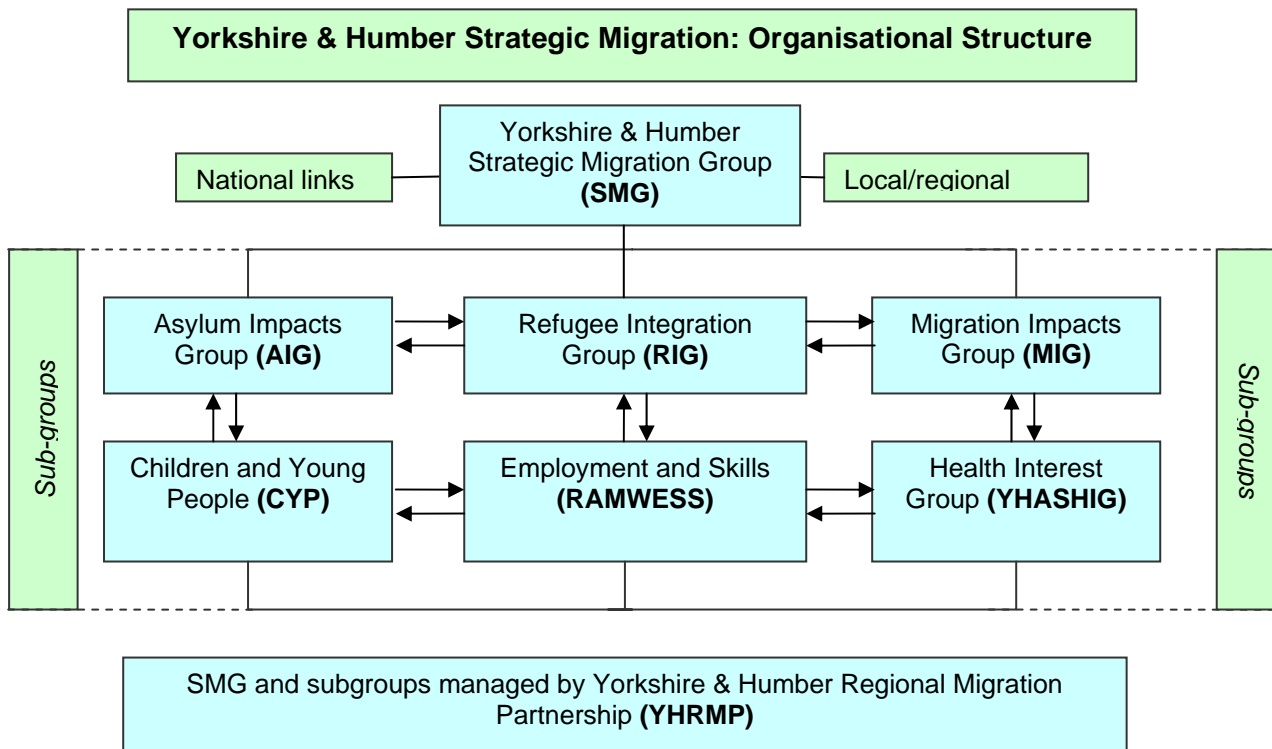
The Framework for Action needs a strong profile via robust representation (of the skills and employment agenda for refugees and asylum seekers) on the membership of the Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Migration Group (SMG)¹⁴. This Group is the main policy body for the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Migration Partnership. It meets 4 times a year, and focuses on decision-making and strategic advice (rather than information provision). The SMG provides strategic leadership and advice for the region on all matters to do with migrants (including refugees and asylum seekers) and proactively influences policy and service delivery nationally, regionally and locally to ensure positive impact upon the balanced needs of both immigrants and the region.

Current members include local authority representation, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, Refugee Council, Northern Refugee Centre, Health Sector, Yorkshire Forward, the Voluntary Sector (Refugee Council and Northern Refugee Centre), the Regional Assembly, UK Border Agency (Regional Director), Police, Jobcentre Plus and the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Migration Partnership: Manager [Secretariat].

It is our independent view that the skills and employment agenda for refugees and asylum seekers requires a 'champion' at SMG level and that this role should be filled by the Director of the Regional Skills Partnership.

¹⁴ For further SMG documentation please visit <http://www.refugeeaccess.info/default.asp?step=4&pid=488>

SMG Organisational Structure



SMG meeting dates are set in advance, and it is suggested that an update on the Framework for Action activity is provided at the 18th September and / or 11th December meeting including our recommendation for improved profile and representation of the skills and employment agenda by a nominated 'champion' at SMG level.

Proposed success measures:

- Agreement by the SMG to have the skills and employment 'champion' included in its membership;
- Explicit inclusion of the Framework for Action in the SMG's new Business Plan likely to be prepared in March 2009 for the following 12 month activity period;
- Inclusion of the Framework for Action in all appropriate regional and local strategies (as identified by RAMWESS - see next recommendation)

Recommendation 2: RAMWESS Task and Finish Group

The Refugees and Migrant Workers Employment and Skills Sub Group (RAMWESS) is one of six sub-groups (themed groups) that reports into the SMG. It has existed for 2-3 years, and has attracted contributions from many organisations and individuals. The Chair-holder of RAMWESS has changed over time having been a representative of Jobcentre Plus and more recently the Regional Skills Partnership Director. RAMWESS focuses on learning, skills, employability and employment for migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. It currently includes eight objectives within its Terms of Reference:

1. To develop a coordinated approach to regional activity aimed at supporting new refugees and migrant workers into work
2. To develop the skills of new refugees with the aim of improving their employability
3. To develop a clear baseline of current level of activity and set improvement targets
4. To develop a clear business case for employers in order to address barriers to engagement
5. To influence funding opportunities
6. To report progress to Yorkshire & Humberside Strategic Migration Group (SMG) for Asylum Seekers and Refugees as required
7. To ensure that the particular needs of new refugees and migrant workers are included in the development of regional economic and employment strategies
8. To support the SMG in promoting a positive vision of the cultural and economic benefits to the region of improving the skills of and employing refugees and migrant workers

Current members include: Jobcentre Plus (Y&H), Yorkshire & the Humber Regional Migration Partnership, Learning & Skills Council (Y&H), Yorkshire Forward, Sector Skills Development Agency, Refugee Council, Trade Unions Congress, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, RIES (building on the success of SUNRISE), Yorkshire & Humberside, Northern Refugee Centre, QED, South Yorkshire Employer Coalition, West Yorkshire Employer Coalition, RETAS Leeds, Fair Play, Back to Work Company and Humberside Learning Consortium.

Having consulted partners on the best way forward for RAMWESS we conclude that this forum is highly valuable, but that there are opportunities for achieving specific success in 2008 and 2009 strategically in the region, and future success through the Framework for Action's implementation from 2009 onwards. As such, we recommend that RAMWESS adopts the role of a task and finish group between October 2008 and March 2009 with the specific purpose of ensuring that the Framework for Action achieves a higher profile, and is embedded in all relevant regional and local strategies and plans, including the SMG Business Plan March 2009-March 2010.

This may mean a slight refocus also to:

- The current Terms of Reference (see below)
- The membership (see below)
- The relationship between RAMWESS, the SMG, the new 'Employing People Group'¹⁵ and the proposed Operational Network (see below)
- The leadership of RAMWESS (see recommendation 3)

The Terms of Reference would benefit from including statements that explicitly link the work of RAMWESS members to the successful development of the Framework for Action's profile in the region; and activities that will ensure successful dissemination and advocacy of the Framework to all relevant regional and local partners.

RAMWESS may, for example, consider building up strategic momentum with view to hosting a regional conference between January and March 2009 that will further the opportunities for embedding the Framework for Action in regional and local strategies and plans¹⁶. The Task and Finish Group should prioritise communication activity and partner engagement work as necessary so that by 1st April 2009 the Framework has a much higher profile, and the Group can review whether it has achieved the set task. At that point, the Group may wish to evolve again, and re-develop its activities for the 2009-2010 period.

The membership of the Task and Finish Group was discussed at one of the study's workshop events (28th July 2008), and given the strategic focus to March 2009, it was felt that there should be a core membership including the following organisations and representation:

- The YHRMP Manager
- The Regional Skills Partnership Director (Chair)
- Yorkshire Forward Economic Inclusion Team senior representative
- Regional Learning and Skills Council senior representative
- Jobcentre Plus senior representative
- Voluntary and community sector representative
- RETAS and RIES Managers
- Business Link
- Business in the Community and an Employer Coalition representative
- TUC / Unionlearn
- The new Information, Advice and Guidance contractor for the region (Careers Yorkshire and the Humber, from August 2008)

Each individual member needs to have sufficient authority within their organisation to be able to make decisions at the Task and Finish Group meetings.

Additional representation on the Task and Finish Group may be required from other contributors as agreed.

It is also felt that the Task and Finish Group requires a more formal 'status' and reporting line to the Regional Skills Partnership and 'Employing People Group'.

¹⁵ The Employing people group is sub group of the Business Support partnership which exists to oversee the Business Simplification process in Y & H

¹⁶ Depending on the timing of this event it may coincide naturally with the wider launch of the new Refugee and Asylum Seeker Integration Strategy being prepared by the YHRMP Refugee Integration Manager. In this way, economies of scale might be achieved by providing a single regional event to launch the Strategy and the Framework for Action

Recommendation 3: Leadership

Leadership for the refugee and asylum seeker skills and employment agenda needs to come through more than a single champion. It must include a range of individuals, structures and advocacy activity between October 2008 and March 2009 including:

- Regional 'Champion' accepted on to the SMG membership;
- Leadership of the refocused Task and Finish Group;
- Future leadership of the priorities for action e.g. a business/ organisational 'champion' to spearhead the proposed employer engagement campaign from 2009 onwards.

Finally, in terms of future leadership for the priorities for action contained in this Framework, we believe, that leaders will emerge naturally as a consequence of the proposed RAMWESS Operational Network (see recommendation 4)

Recommendation 4: RAMWESS Operational Network

To support the Task and Finish Group, and to ensure a sustained partnership that has the talent, capacity and expertise to implement the Framework for Action, it is critical that an operational network is in place across the Yorkshire and the Humber region.

This network probably exists very informally at present, and includes a range of service delivery agencies that provide support, advice and guidance to refugees and asylum seekers. However, we also believe that the informal nature of this network probably means that opportunities for co-ordination of resources and the sharing of learning and good practice may be being missed to the ultimate detriment of the client groups being supported.

A 'virtual network' or database of all known regional and local organisations and individuals with a role to play in implementing the Framework for Action should be established, and an 'engagement plan' put in place by the RAMWESS Task and Finish Group so that during the period between October 2008 and March 2009:

- The Framework for Action can be shared with operational partners;
- A series of small-scale events can be staged that allow interested parties to 'sign up' to working groups that are formed around each of the outcomes and respective priority actions identified in this report;
- Practical commitments can be made by operational partners to supporting the Framework for Action;
- Leaders can be identified for representing priority for action activity areas from 1st April 2009 onwards from within this operational network.

Outcomes

Should all four recommendations be adopted, it our belief that:

- the Framework for Action will achieve a high profile in the region;
- a new level of leadership for the refugee and asylum seeker skills and employment agenda will be secured and embedded in all relevant strategies and plans
- greater opportunities for knowledge transfer, learning and capacity building between strategic and operational partners will be offered;
- commitments will be made to the future implementation of the Framework from 2009 onwards.

Framework for Action lifespan

The Framework for Action is recommended to have a lifespan that runs up to the next Comprehensive Spending Review (2011 – month yet to be confirmed) and / or in parallel with the new Refugee and Asylum Seeker Integration Strategy being prepared by the YHRMP Refugee Integration Manager, which we understand is likely to be launched in 2009.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Language at Work, (TUC, CBI, DIUS, 2007)

Finding Sanctuary, Enriching Yorkshire and Humber – Consultative draft of the Integration Strategy for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (2009 – 2011) (Y&H Regional Migration Partnership, December 2008)

Integration Matters, A National Strategy for Refugee Integration (Home Office, March 2005, under review as at September 2008)

London Metropolitan University, various publications

Navigation Guide: Employment Issues for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, Carter M, (ICAR, July 2008)

Refugees and Asylum Seekers - An education training and employment guide (London Metropolitan University, 2008)

Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU), various publications

The Refugee Council (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

The Regional Integration Strategy, 2003-06 (Yorkshire & Humberside Consortium for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, 2003. To be superseded in March 2009)

Working to Rebuild Lives, A Refugee Employment Strategy (DWP, 2003)

8. CONSULTEES

The following people have been consulted during the course of the Framework development. The list is also helpful in identifying the great majority of stakeholder organisations.

Peter Amphlett	Unionlearn, Trades Union Congress
Alistair Bamford	QED UK
David Brown	Yorkshire & Humber Regional Migration Partnership
Sara Buck	Leeds City Council (SUNRISE)
Lyndsey Bunn	Yorkshire and Humber Assembly
Sharon Burke	Unionlearn, Trades Union Congress
Clare Coates	Local Government Yorkshire and the Humber
Naomi Cohen	Refugee New Arrivals Project (RNAP)
Marcia Cunningham	Government Office, Yorkshire and the Humber
Gurdev Dahele	ABDN Minority Ethnic Enterprise Network
Hilary Davies	CITB - Construction Skills
St John Deakin	Sheffield City Council
Linda Dhesi	Jobcentre Plus
Sam Donaldson	West Yorkshire Employers' Coalition
Ann-Marie Edwardes	Government Office, Yorkshire and the Humber
Max Farrar	Leeds Metropolitan University
Alison France	DWP
Paula Grizzard	The Back to Work Company
Anj Handa	WYEC
John Harris	Regional Forum, Yorkshire & the Humber
Paul Harvey	Voluntary Action Sheffield
Ian Hastings	Jobcentre Plus

Imtiaz Jina	QED UK
Shamsa Latif	Jobcentre Plus
James Lee	Refugee Council
Simon Leroy	LGYH
Philippa Lester	LSC
John Lewis	Trades Union Congress, Yorkshire and the Humber
Pat Lister	LSC
Alan Matthews	Yorkshire Forward
Caroline Melton	Business in the Community
Barbara Mitchell	Skills for Care
Debbie Monaghan	Jobcentre Plus Leeds East
Michael Noble	Yorkshire Universities
Clare Norfolk	Jobcentre Plus
David Norman	Government Office, Yorkshire and the Humber
Andrew Palmer	CBI
Thomas Parry	FSB
Sharon Pickering	Regional Skills Partnership
Caroline Rowley	Association of Colleges, Yorkshire and the Humber
Jim Steinke	Northern Refugee Centre
Lynne Stevens	Jobcentre Plus
Jacqueline Stevenson	Leeds Metropolitan University
Steve Walmsley	LGYH
Duncan Wells	Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service, Leeds
John Willott	Leeds Metropolitan University

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Approach/Mitigating Actions
Political and Legal			
Change of priorities and policies of Government	High	High	Ongoing review of changing Government policy in respect of immigration and the translation of those policies and the impact they have on this region by the Regional Migration Partnership and Core Group; review and adaptation of the Framework for Action as appropriate (e.g. there are a limited number of skills and employment outcomes currently available for asylum seekers owing to legal restrictions – were these to change in future additional outcomes might be possible)
Negative media coverage	Med	Med-High	Awareness of wider media coverage that might impact on public perception of refugees and asylum seekers; consistent positive PR campaign
Leadership and Management			
Failure to get all parties to share same understanding of purpose	Low	High	Robust process of communication of this Framework for Action to all key partners with a role to play in its strategic positioning, advocacy and future implementation
Lack of support by senior staff in regional strategic organisations	Med	Med	Visible responsibility for this Framework and its advocacy by senior officers in Core Group member organisations; capacity building and ongoing sharing of knowledge and information about the main skills and employment issues for refugees and asylum seekers in Yorkshire and the Humber.
Lack of leadership skills to ensure this Framework for Action is advocated in the way required between October 2008 and March 2009	Low	High	The Core Group needs to identify the leadership it requires for SMG representation; chairmanship; and for future workstreams described in the Framework for Action (e.g. employer engagement; service delivery)
Structures			
Inability to develop Core Group and wider Network structures in the Autumn of 2008	Low	Med	High quality chairmanship of the Core Group, and efficient processes for appropriate recruitment to that group; clear communication of the Core Group's main task in raising the profile of the Framework for Action between October 2008 and March 2009; and in developing dissemination opportunities to engage with the wider Network in the region that will have a role in implementing the Framework from April 2009 onwards.
Delivery			
Failure to engage and excite the Network of relevant service deliverers in the region	Low	High	The Framework for Action is strategic, but its implementation relies entirely on the performance and co-ordination of services by a range of delivery organisations spread across Yorkshire and the Humber. They must be engaged, and helped to see the benefits and value added of sharing information, sharing knowledge and co-ordinating provision of services to the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Approach/Mitigating Actions
Monitoring and Evaluation			
Failure to agree an adequate monitoring and evaluation system for measuring the successful implementation of the Framework for Action between 2008 and 2011	High	High	Ensuring that evaluation and monitoring is a key task for the Core Group to define and agree by March 2009, and making best use of the talents of Yorkshire Futures to advise on an appropriate (realistic) evaluation framework mindful of significant limitations in data collection opportunities relating to refugee and asylum seeker client groups (owing to the fact that where data is collected by key partner organisations often the individual is not obliged to declare their status as a refugee or asylum seeker).
Sustainability			
Failure to lobby for and subsequently secure sufficient resources to tackle the significant barriers to enabling successful skills and employment outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers in the region	Medium	Medium	The Core Group recognises that a range of funding sources and resources are currently in place to support skills and employment action for refugees and asylum seekers, but to make bigger impacts over the 2008-2011 period may require additional resources or a change in provision priorities (e.g. ESOL provision). Should funding not be available to unlock such persistent skills challenges, the likelihood remains high that the client group will not achieve sustainable employment commensurate with their skills, knowledge and experience.
Employer Engagement			
Failure to engage businesses/ organisations in Yorkshire and the Humber	Medium	High	A positive employer engagement campaign is a key action within the Framework, but there is no guarantee of success. Testing likely employer reaction to the proposed campaign will help ensure that it is positioned in an effective manner in the region.