Joint Foreword

We are delighted to provide a foreword for this, the second refugee integration strategy for our region. Its title ‘Finding Sanctuary: Enriching Yorkshire and Humber’ reflects the two way relationship that there has always been between the region and refugees.

Yorkshire and Humber has much to be proud of in this area. As a region we have a long and proud history of offering sanctuary to those fleeing war and persecution. In return the contribution to the economic and social fabric of our region that refugees have made throughout the 20th and 21st centuries has been immense. Many of our most famous and successful companies started life with someone arriving in our region, making it their home and establishing a business.

The social and economic benefits that can flow from this, for the wider region, are significant. We know that refugees are often highly educated, highly skilled and entrepreneurial. Providing pathways to enable the region to recognise, grow and nurture these skills lies at the heart of this strategy.

This region stands at the forefront nationally of work to harness the contribution of refugees - we were the first region to have a refugee integration strategy, and with this revision and refocusing we remain national leaders in work to integrate refugees.

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Quotations from Consultation with Refugees and Asylum Seekers 2008 (except the final quotation which is from Consultation with Organisations 2008).
Introduction

Refugees and asylum seekers come here to escape persecution in their country of origin and to find sanctuary. We are proud of providing sanctuary, but also thankful to refugees and asylum seekers for their past contribution and we look forward to their future in Yorkshire and Humber. There is a lot of good work carried out by individuals and organisations from all sectors across the region, but there is more that can be done to achieve integration and enable refugees and asylum seekers to reach their full potential.

Here, the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Migration Partnership (YHRMP) sets out our region’s integration strategy for refugees and asylum seekers under the themes of ‘Finding Sanctuary, Enriching Yorkshire and Humber’. The strategy provides a vision for the region, and key objectives for achieving the integration of refugees and asylum seekers (see p. 4). We identify priorities for action for six areas of integration: Housing, Health, Work and Skills, Safety, Community and Society, Children and Young People. Further detail is provided in the supporting documents for this strategy, which includes the action plan (see p. 8).

The strategy deals primarily with regional priorities and the actions will be delivered by a range of regional organisations. This Yorkshire and Humber strategy provides a framework for the development of local strategies, which will identify the key issues, priorities and actions in each local area. YHRMP will be working with local areas to encourage and support the development of local integration strategies.

The strategy is owned by the Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Migration Group (SMG), which is the place where a range of stakeholders get together to discuss and agree policy around migration issues. This meets quarterly and is made up of key national, regional and local organisations and representatives of Local Government. Implementation of the strategy is overseen by the Refugee Integration Group (RIG), a sub-group of the SMG. The Refugee Integration Manager at YHRMP is responsible for implementing the whole strategy and reports quarterly to the RIG and the SMG.

Consultation

The strategy has been written following wide consultation around the region including:

- 303 questionnaire responses from refugees and asylum seekers
- 28 refugee participants in 3 focus groups
- 49 responses to the strategy consultation from a range of organisations
- 25 responses to the culture and integration consultation

Further information about the consultation can be found in the supporting documents (see p. 8).
Vision, Aim and Objectives

The vision for refugee and asylum seeker integration in the region is:

Refugees and asylum seekers find sanctuary in Yorkshire and Humber, become full members of society and contribute to all aspects of life in the region.

The aim of the strategy is the:

- **Integration** of refugees and asylum seekers into the Yorkshire and Humber region and its local communities

There are four key cross-cutting objectives of the strategy:

- **Information and Understanding** - Develop information, data and research to improve understanding about refugees and asylum seekers
- **Service Delivery** - Deliver services to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and regional partners
- **Co-ordination and Planning** - Provide co-ordination and co-operation across the region to improve planning, strategies and policies for refugees and asylum seekers
- **Participation and Contribution** - Increase participation and representation, and enhance the contributions of refugees and asylum seekers to the region

Integration

The integration of refugees and asylum seekers benefits those who come here for sanctuary and also enriches the Yorkshire and Humber region. It is important for community cohesion, fulfilling social responsibilities and as part of a civilised and decent society.

The strategy uses the European Council on Refugees and Exiles definition of integration:

“A long-term two-way process of change, that relates both to the conditions for and the actual participation of refugees in all aspects of life of the country of durable asylum as well as to refugees’ own sense of belonging and membership of European societies.”
Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Refugees and asylum seekers are ‘forced migrants’, who have made a claim for protection under the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The UN Convention defines a refugee as someone who,

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

Successful and meaningful integration happens at the local level, in neighbourhoods and local communities. It is a two-way process and is the responsibility of everyone in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

This strategy, like those in most other regions and nations of the UK, takes the view that integration should include all refugees and asylum seekers. Integration is harder for asylum seekers, and particularly difficult for refused asylum seekers, because of their status and national policy on rights and entitlements. However, this strategy is founded on the premise that integration should apply to everyone beginning when they enter the region and continuing for as long as they remain.

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“It means being part of the community or society I am living in, in all respect doing things like a normal person and not being treated differently because of my status”

“Where I have a place and where there is a place for me...a bundle of belongings is not the only thing a refugee brings, there are also transferable skills”

“The objective of integration programmes and policies should be the establishment of a mutual and responsible relationship between individual refugees, civil society and host states which promotes equality, self-determination and sustainable self-sufficiency for refugees and acceptance and positive action in favour of refugees by European governments and societies”

Migration to the Yorkshire and Humber region has occurred for hundreds of years. Early refugee groups in the UK include Huguenots (late 17th century), and Jews fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe (late 19th century). There were many groups of refugees throughout the 20th Century arriving in Yorkshire and Humber including people from the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, Hungarians, Ugandan Asians, Chileans, Vietnamese, Bosnians and Kosovans. The dispersal of asylum seekers across the UK began in 1999, which led to an increase in the number of asylum seekers in Yorkshire and Humber (and other regions), and development of support services working with refugees and asylum seekers.

‘Refugees and Asylum Seekers’ in this document refers collectively to all refugees, asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers. We define these as:

- **Refugee** - A person given leave to remain in the UK as a result of a process which began with a claim and/or assessment under the UN Convention.

- **Asylum Seeker** - A person who has applied for protection under the UN Convention and is awaiting a decision on this outcome (including different stages of appeal).

- **Refused Asylum Seeker** - A person who was previously an asylum seeker and whose claim for asylum has been refused with all appeal rights exhausted.

Refugees and asylum seekers, while sharing some characteristics with other migrants and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, have specific needs and suffer from multiple disadvantage, exclusion and inequalities. Certain groups of refugees and asylum seekers experience further disadvantage, for example due to their gender, age, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation, and therefore require specific actions to ensure equality.

Many refugees and asylum seekers do not know to where they are fleeing, and a small proportion in the world come to the UK and to the Yorkshire and Humber region. There are currently between 28,000 and 39,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the Yorkshire and Humber region, made up of 15,000 - 20,000 refugees, 5,500 asylum seekers and 7,500 - 13,500 refused asylum seekers. This is 0.5% - 0.75% of the total population.

Regional Priorities for Action

Housing
Refugees and asylum seekers have mixed experiences of housing in terms of access, quality and support with some experiencing homelessness.

Priorities for Action
1. Research the housing needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers to inform housing planning and provision
2. Ensure that the housing needs of refugees and asylum seekers are recognised in regional and local strategies
3. Provide suitable housing for asylum seekers
4. Meet the housing needs of refugees particularly during transition from asylum support
5. Reduce the impact of homelessness among destitute refused asylum seekers
6. Increase refugee and asylum seeker participation in housing matters

Health
Refugees and asylum seekers often have specific health needs relating to persecution in their countries of origin, existing health conditions or those that have developed in the UK.

Priorities for Action
1. Understand the health needs of refugees and asylum seekers, planning and providing services accordingly
2. Provide strategic co-ordination for refugee and asylum seeker health across the region
3. Raise the profile of refugee and asylum seeker health needs within the region
4. Provide clarity of entitlements and improve access to services
5. Address the mental health needs of refugees and asylum seekers
6. Improve the participation of refugees and asylum seekers in planning and delivering of health services

Work and Skills
Refugees and asylum seekers bring a wide range of skills and experience to the Yorkshire and Humber region. However, many find that they cannot find a job, or one that matches their capabilities.

Priorities for Action
1. Collect and analyse data on refugee and asylum seeker employment and skills to improve services, individual progression and maximise their contribution to the region
2. Improve the co-ordination of English language provision for refugees and asylum seekers
3. Increase access and support into Further Education and Higher Education
4. Increase the employment rate of refugees and the level at which they are employed to close the gap with that of the wider population
5. Support refugee entrepreneurs and business start-up
6. Increase employer engagement with refugees and asylum seekers
7. Encourage volunteering opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers

“I am properly housed, I appreciate that”

“When we get our status, we get serious problems with houses”

“There is good health care and we are supported with everything”

“I have difficulties to access health care”

“I would like to pay tax and participate in the development of Yorkshire”

“At the moment I need to learn English, after that I need to work”
Safety
Refugees and asylum seekers have fled from unsafe environments and are seeking sanctuary. In the UK, they can also be unsafe as victims of crime, harassment or violence.

Priorities for Action
1. Promote Yorkshire and Humber as a region of safety and sanctuary
2. Monitor and reduce discrimination, racism and harassment
3. Provide services and information related to family separation and reunion
4. Support refugees and asylum seekers experiencing domestic violence or family tensions
5. Enable the provision of good quality legal representation for asylum seekers
6. Provide information to refugees and asylum seekers on their rights and responsibilities

Community and Society
Refugees and asylum seekers have a lot to offer local communities. However, they may face negative perceptions and attitudes, isolation or not participate fully in society.

Priorities for Action
1. Create opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to mix with other communities
2. Provide information to, and consult with, local host communities about refugees and asylum seekers
3. Encourage responsible media and political coverage of refugee and asylum seeker issues
4. Plan and increase the cultural and recreational participation of refugees and asylum seekers
5. Ensure inclusion of refugee and asylum seeker issues in community cohesion work
6. Improve the representation of refugees and asylum seekers as individuals and through refugee community organisations
7. Understand the role of refugee community organisations and faith communities in providing support to refugees and asylum seekers

Children and Young People
Refugee and asylum seeker children have a range of specific needs which differ from adults. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs) also have different statuses and support structures.

Priorities for Action
1. Research and understand the needs of refugee and asylum seeker children and young people
2. Recognise the needs and safeguarding of the child as central, regardless of immigration status
3. Enable people working with refugee and asylum seeker children to understand, identify and respond to their needs
4. Support for refugee and asylum seeker children across the region
5. Provide good quality, consistent and co-ordinated support for all UASCs in the region
6. Address the childcare needs of refugees and asylum seekers
7. Increase the participation of refugee and asylum seeker children and young people in issues that affect them

"Here in the UK for the first time in my life I feel safe. Where I came from I didn't have that, it means a lot to me and my future is here in the UK"

"Some people sometime call us f****** black asylum"

"Everybody seems to welcome me"

"When people hear that we are asylum seekers they don't want to mix with us"

"My son is seven and he is better at English than I am. He speaks like a Yorkshire man"

"Asylum seeking children are a particularly vulnerable group...their needs are ‘hidden’ needs"
Supporting Documents

Supporting documents for the strategy including the action plan can be found on the YHRMP website:
www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk