Making Connections Building Resilience - a summary for people with lived experience

Introduction

This publication is part of a wider project, Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber, and has been produced with the financial support of the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, which aims to make management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Migration Yorkshire and in no way reflect the views of the funder, the European Commission, or the United Kingdom Responsible Authority (UKRA). Neither the European Commission nor UKRA is liable for any use that may be made of the information in this publication.

Yorkshire and Humber has a long and proud history of offering sanctuary to those fleeing war and persecution. Our region has time and again demonstrated strong leadership in refugee and asylum issues. It is also the home of several examples of best practice in refugee integration. However, there is more to be done. There are still barriers and challenges to integration.

This is summary of the new Yorkshire and Humber Refugee Integration Strategy, ‘Making Connections, Building Resilience’, which was launched at the beginning of 2022. It includes the vision and values that inform and define the strategy, as well as integration priorities identified for our region. It was developed following consultation with over 300 stakeholders, and the full document (in English) can be found on the Migration Yorkshire website (www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk). The strategy is being overseen by a new regional Refugee Integration Forum.

The new strategy has been designed as a tool to support stakeholders from a wide range of sectors and geographical areas. It will raise the profile of refugee integration in our region and help improve outcomes for refugees living here. The strategic priorities delineated below are aspirational and form part of our vision for refugee integration in Yorkshire and Humber. But there is a lot of work to be done, and we hope that you can help us fulfil our vision.

This summary aims to make the strategy accessible for refugees, asylum seekers and other people who have lived experience of fleeing war and persecution and invite you to take ownership of the integration process. By learning and improving your English, volunteering, training, studying, working, and meeting new people in the communities where you live, you are contributing skills, ideas, and experiences that have enriched and benefited our region. The new strategy can help us achieve even more if we work together to ensure that our region continues to welcome people who have lived experience of fleeing war and persecution and develop the best possible integration services.

Vision and values

> “Yorkshire and Humber is a region where refugees feel safe and welcome, rebuild their lives, fulfil their aspirations, and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of the communities where they live”

This vision is complemented by a set of values that define us as a region and inform everything that we do to enable refugee integration, including our services, policies, and attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. The values help us tackle the barriers to integration by reminding us of what is at stake when people fleeing war and persecution rebuild their lives in Yorkshire and Humber.

Our values

- **Welcome** - Refugees find sanctuary and compassion in the communities where they settle
- **Inclusion** - Services and communities are actively engaged in removing barriers and are well equipped to meet the needs of refugees
- **Collaboration** - Stakeholders work together in strong and sustainable partnerships recognising each other’s strengths
- **Opportunity** - Refugees can rebuild their lives, fulfil their aspirations, and make contributions to the communities where they live
- **Equality** - Refugees are recognised as individuals with different characteristics, needs and aspirations, and are treated fairly

Strategic priorities

Housing and environment

- All refugees have access to timely and good quality housing support and advocacy services, including information about housing options, rights, and responsibilities
- All asylum accommodation meets local authority standards and local stakeholders can monitor effectively both procurement and compliance
- Refugees and asylum seekers housed in more isolated or remote locations, or in contingency accommodation can access services through various forms of provision, or have support with transport where needed
- Family-based placements are available for UASC, with support for carers
- Refugees and asylum seekers are accommodated in welcoming and friendly neighbourhoods, have access to local information, and can safely use local spaces such as shops, markets, parks, and public transport

Economic Integration

- The skills, qualifications and work experience of refugees are assessed and recognised at the earliest opportunity
- All refugees and asylum seekers have access to welfare support or emergency relief when needed, preventing destitution
- Refugees access tailored and sustainable employment and business development support programmes that meet their diverse needs and are relevant to local labour markets
- Refugees access higher education, training, volunteering, and work experience opportunities that meet their aspirations and increase their employability
- Employers and businesses are aware of the rights and needs of refugees and actively promote refugee employment

Health and wellbeing

- Refugees and asylum seekers are screened as soon as possible after arrival, have access to emergency treatment and immunisations, and are supported to register with local GPs and dentists
- Refugees and asylum seekers, including more vulnerable groups such as women and people with disabilities, know their rights, understand how the NHS and social care works in the region and can access suitable services

- Refugees and asylum seekers have access to good quality mental health and wellbeing services that meet their needs, including wellbeing groups and activities
- All health and wellbeing services provide good quality, professional interpreting and translation services, following NHS guidance
- Refugees and asylum seekers have access to health promotion and awareness services, and providers are actively engaged in eliminating health inequalities

Community and belonging

- Yorkshire and Humber, through its local neighbourhoods, social and community settings, and local media, provides a welcoming environment to refugees and asylum seekers
- Refugees make sustainable connections with people from all backgrounds and have regular access to meaningful opportunities to interact with others
- Refugees and asylum seekers are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the UK, and have access to good quality legal advice and representation where needed
- Refugees feel safe, develop trusting relationships with the police and other authorities, and are confident about reporting crime, especially hate crime

- The culture, leisure, and sports sectors in the region are actively engaged in the integration of refugees through the provision of safe, accessible, and welcoming activities

Families and young people

- Refugee and asylum-seeking children can access education as soon as possible after arrival in the UK in schools and colleges that are safe and welcoming
- Refugees have access to information, advice and support with family tracing and family reunion
- Refugees and asylum seekers are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the UK regarding issues such as safeguarding children and domestic abuse, and have access to culturally sensitive advice and support services
- Suitable and accessible childcare and other family support services are available to all refugee families and family members who need them
- Young refugees and asylum seekers, including UASC and care leavers, feel safe, supported, and have opportunities to recover, develop and thrive in their new communities

Language and communication

- The English language needs of refugees and asylum seekers are assessed as soon as possible after arrival in the region using consistent and comprehensive tools
- All types of ESOL provision across the region are effectively mapped and promoted, and refugees can access suitable provision locally
- Refugees and asylum seekers have access to a range of ESOL provision that is suitable to their individual needs and aspirations, including informal learning opportunities
- Services and organisations provide suitable, good quality and professional interpreting and translation services, including translated resources in accessible formats
- Refugees and asylum seekers are digitally included, and have the required skills, equipment and connectivity to access services and support online

Information and data

- Services and organisations in Yorkshire and Humber have access to, and are able to use effectively, information and data resources about refugees and asylum seekers
- Services and organisations collect, store and share data and information on refugee integration in consistent, effective and robust ways where relevant, compliant with

data protection legislation
- There is regular engagement and collaboration between the research community and other stakeholders in the region, identifying priority information gaps and fostering effective dissemination of research output
- Refugee communities are involved in the production of data, research and information about integration
- The impacts of services and interventions on refugee integration are regularly monitored and evaluated by providers and independent researchers

Service planning and provision

- Leadership within services, especially in the public sector, are committed to refugee integration and to developing welcoming and inclusive services
- Services promote positive action for refugees and asylum seekers, and allocate the required resources for eliminating disadvantages they face in accessing provision
- Refugee integration is embedded across providers' whole organisations, including commissioning, recruitment, and learning and development
- Service providers ensure that all relevant staff are adequately trained on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and that training is regularly updated

- Providers in Yorkshire and Humber develop holistic services, and collaborate effectively with each other through strong partnerships, robust referral mechanisms and joint commissioning

The voluntary and community sector

- The refugee voluntary and community sector in Yorkshire and Humber has access to sustainable funding that enables it to develop and retain knowledge and expertise in refugee integration
- Key stakeholders in the public and private sectors are aware of the strengths of the refugee VCS, and engage effectively with the sector
- All relevant localities in the region have vibrant, well-funded refugee voluntary and community groups and organisations

- Yorkshire and Humber have strong and empowered Refugee Community Organisations that effectively represent refugee communities
- The region’s VCS provides meaningful volunteering opportunities for refugees, asylum seekers, and people from other backgrounds who want to contribute to integration

Participation

- Refugees are meaningfully represented in workforces, boards, partnerships, and leadership positions across the region
- Refugees are involved in shaping services and organisations through existing participation forums and mechanisms
- Refugees can articulate their views in independent forums and organisations that have influence on the integration process
- Services, organisations, and local communities are actively engaged in tackling the barriers that different groups of refugees face, and provide adequate incentives for participation
- Refugees have opportunities to shape the narrative in a variety of media, and can influence public perceptions on forced migration and asylum in the region

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