

Research Brief  
Workshop 2

# Refugee integration: supporting services in long term perspectives

**‘Staying, Refugee Integration and Time’ RSE Project**

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## Introduction

This research brief reviews some of the main ideas and debates that emerged from the second participatory workshop of the project 'Staying, Refugee Integration and Time', funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) that took place on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The project brings together scholars and researchers specialised in refugee integration across Scotland, as well as practitioners and refugee-led groups, to discuss and develop a collaborative research agenda to enhance our understanding of the process of long-term refugee staying and its relation to integration processes.

The second workshop included 14 participants from diverse organisations working with the refugee population.

The second workshop invited participants to address two key questions and discuss the current state of support services available to refugees and existing gaps. The transcripts and visual mind maps derived from the workshop discussion were thematically analysed. The key themes from each exercise are summarised below.

### **Theme 1: Overview of the refugee support services<sup>1</sup>:**

The first exercise invited participants to introduce themselves and briefly describe a range of support services offered to refugee communities in Scotland. As a result, a wide range of services supporting individuals with different immigration statuses including refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary leave to remain, unaccompanied asylum seekers, asylum seekers, and British citizenship was outlined and discussed. These services included:

- Casework: supporting newly arrived refugees to access welfare services (including housing, education, and health) and learning the English language.
- Supporting family reunions including psychosocial support and access to welfare service.
- Supporting refugees to re-engage with the labour market via tailored advice, support with training, and work placement.
- Providing one-to-one tailored advice to young, unaccompanied asylum seekers to navigate the welfare and asylum systems.
- Advocacy and community outreach work including activism campaigns, exhibitions, engagement with diverse media outlets.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the list of services reflect workshop discussion and it is not full list of support services offered to refugees in Scotland

- Supporting refugees, migrants, and settled inhabitants to get together through diverse activities offered via dedicated groups and community events (exhibitions, art performances, classes).
- Supporting refugees to develop social connections and friendships via activities offered through dedicated interest groups and community events.

The workshop discussion identified several synergies within services offered to the population of refugee background that could offer opportunities for further collaboration in the future. At the same time, participants highlighted **a need for a wider platform that would offer them an opportunity for knowledge and practice sharing and further collaboration to ensure greater partnership in service delivery** and provision and thus more holistic support to the refugee and migrant population.

## Theme 2: Evaluation of the existing integration services

The second question invited participants to reflect on the types of evaluation they have applied to ensure that the services being offered meet their client's needs. The thematic analysis of the workshop discussion revealed key types of applied evaluation summarised below:

1. **Client feedback forms** were one of the most frequently used type of evaluation applied by our participants. The key focus of such evaluation was to assess the client's satisfaction level and identify potential gaps in service delivery. Due to the low cost of such type of data collection, this evaluation method was applied by all participants of the workshop.
2. **Qualitative data** including observations and client testimonies were another widely used method of data collection on evaluation of services offered to refugees.
3. **Key Performance Indicators set by the project funder** were another form of the evaluation outlined by the participants. The focus of such evaluation, as indicated by participants, is often strongly influenced by the terms and conditions of obtained funding.
4. **Quantitative data on clients' use of the service.** These include client's entry records, the type of services being used, and its frequency.
5. **Evaluation Officer.** Organisations with larger resources benefited from the work of the Evaluation Officer whose role was to gather, assess and analyse internal client data. However, only a few organisations could benefit from such a role due to limited resources.
6. **Participation in a range of academic research projects** provided an opportunity to reflect on support work and services offered to the population of refugee background.

The discussion also revealed a number of challenges, including:

1. **Lack of longitudinal analysis of available client data:** While our participants were able to identify different methods of data collection of their clients' records they also outlined very few resources to analyse the data to inform the service delivery from a long-term perspective. As a result of limited resources, little is known about how refugees are moving on after they stop engaging with the refugee services.
2. **Gaps in the data and lack of consistency in data gathering:** A number of participants indicated that their clients tend to engage, dis-engage, and re-engage with different services on a number of occasions and at different stages of their life which makes it challenging to holistically capture their integration journeys.

### **Theme 3: Gaps in research and knowledge about refugee integration**

The final exercise focused on identifying existing gaps in knowledge about service delivery and the refugee integration process. The participants came out with a list of questions that should be taken into consideration in future research on refugee integration in the long-term perspective. **Questions to be raised/ addressed include:**

1. Greater understanding and data on the impact of the type of accommodation (including hostels, hotels, and social housing) on the path to refugee integration
2. Impact of social structures and implication of hostile environment on the refugee integration process
3. A greater understanding of how the social, political, and economic changes within Scotland over the years have had an impact on the process of refugee integration. How the structural barriers and racism in Scotland have changed over the years, and how did they impact refugee integration?
4. What is the end point of integration?

**If you require further information about the project, please do not hesitate to contact us:**

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