

Scottish Refugee Integration Forum
draft action plan



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This document is the Draft Action Plan of the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum. More than 50 key actions are set out here which are likely to make a real difference to the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. This Draft Action Plan is realistic and practical, and can be implemented within a relatively short time scale. Although much of the work of the Forum has concentrated on Glasgow, this Draft Action Plan is national in its focus, with many of the key actions relevant to any area where asylum seekers or refugees settle.

This document sets out only the key actions agreed by the Forum. A supporting document (available from www.scotland.gov.uk) contains a wealth of material prepared by the Forum and its Satellite Groups, including a summary of the issues which underpin the key actions set out here, as well as more than 100 additional proposed actions. This document will be used to inform policy development in the future.

The Scottish Refugee Integration Forum was established in January 2002, with an expected lifespan of 18 months. It has the following remit:

- in partnership with the Scottish Executive and in consultation with the wider public and voluntary sector interests to develop action plans to enable the successful integration of refugees¹ in Scotland and the provision of more accessible, co-ordinated and good quality services.

The Forum was also asked to:

- consider all matters necessary to assist refugees to integrate into life in Scotland;
- collect and disseminate examples of good practice from around the country; and
- play a key role in promoting positive images of refugees as members of society.

The publication of this Draft Action Plan comes about half way through the expected lifespan of the Forum. A consultation on the Draft Action Plan will take place in the autumn, with the final Action Plan (reflecting feedback from the consultation exercise) expected to be approved by the Forum in January 2002.

¹ In this context "refugee" means those found to be refugees under the terms of the 1951 UN convention and also those given exceptional leave to remain as persons in need of protection under the European Convention of Human Rights or other humanitarian grounds such as exceptional leave to remain.

Membership

The Scottish Refugee Integration Forum is chaired by Margaret Curran, Minister for Social Justice.² The membership of the Forum is as follows:

Professor Alastair Ager	Director of Centre for International Health Studies
Robert Aldridge	Director of Scottish Housing for Single Homeless
Kathleen Bolt	Principal Legal Officer for the Commission for Racial Equality
Philippa Bonella	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Father Chris Boles SJ	Action of Churches Together in Scotland
Eric Byiers	Strategy Manager, Fife Council (CoSLA representative)
David Comley	Director of Housing, Glasgow City Council and Chair of the Scottish Asylum Seekers Consortium
Ken Corsar	Director of Education Service, Glasgow City Council
Sally Daghlian	Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council
Brian Dempsey	Board Member of Scottish Business in the Community
Kaliani Lyle	Chief Executive of Citizens Advice Scotland
Linda McTavish	Principal of Anniesland College
Sister Isabel Smyth	Scottish Interfaith Council
Mark Batho	Head of Social Justice Group, SEDD
Rachael Reynolds	Home Office Refugee Integration Team

Way of working

The Forum has met four times since January 2002, but the bulk of its work has been carried out through six Satellite Groups. These groups were established by the Forum following its meeting in March 2002, and were charged with the development of the component strands of the Draft Action Plan in each of six areas, broadly corresponding to Scottish Executive departments.

The Satellite Groups brought together a wide range of those with a direct interest in working with asylum seekers and refugees. Membership of the Satellite Groups was drawn from faith groups and organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The full membership of the Satellite Groups and their method of working is set out in the supporting document.

It became clear that the Satellite Group structure could not provide effective coverage of a small number of key cross-cutting issues, and three groups drawn from experienced practitioners were convened specifically to discuss translation and interpretation, advice and information and community preparation.

² The Forum was chaired for its first two meetings by Ian Gray, then Minister for Social Justice.

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In each case, at the request of the Scottish Executive, the groups identified a small number of key actions which have been included in the Draft Action Plan.

Wider context

The Forum is aware that this work is not taking place in isolation. The Forum recognises the significant role which the public and voluntary sector is already playing in supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. At a national UK level, the Home Office is coordinating the development of a similar action plan. The Forum has remained in close contact with the Home Office throughout the production of its Draft Action Plan.

More generally, implementation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act is likely to bring about a number of changes in the ways in which public authorities approach their work with minority ethnic communities generally, and with asylum seekers and refugees. The Act places a new duty on public authorities to ensure that in arranging its functions due regard is paid to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and
- promote equality of opportunity and good race relations.

Wherever possible, the Forum has developed its Draft Action Plan within the overall context of the legislation, particularly in seeking to avoid making specific recommendations in areas (for example in relation to the overall policy approach taken by public authorities) in which it is expected the legislation will have its most significant impact.

Draft Action Plan

The remainder of this document sets out the Draft Action Plan for the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum. Only the key actions are set out here. The supporting document sets out in some detail both the issues which underpin the key actions, and a further range of actions which the Forum believes will also be necessary to achieve the full integration of refugees in Scotland. The sections of the Draft Action Plan mirror that of the supporting document, with the first four groups of key actions relating to cross-cutting issues, and the remainder to each of the service-specific areas considered by the Satellite Groups.

Key Actions : General Cross-Cutting Issues

- (1) There is a need to **recognise and address racism** in Scotland in all its forms. It is recognised that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act will be implemented from November 2002, and that this will lead to an increased focus on racism, but there will be an on-going need to ensure that the work which is being undertaken is effective.

- (2) The Scottish Executive should ensure the wide dissemination of work which is currently being undertaken in Glasgow to **identify experiences and best practice** in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees.
- (3) The Scottish Executive should prepare guidance on the need to implement structures which will **facilitate multi-agency working** in each area.
- (4) The Scottish Executive should take the lead in ensuring that **statistical and tracking information** about the asylum seeker and refugee communities in Scotland is gathered at a national and local level.
- (5) The Scottish Executive should take the lead in ensuring that services providers, asylum seekers and refugees in all areas can **gain access to specialist services**.

Key Actions : Translation and Interpretation

- (6) There is a need for clear guidance from the Scottish Executive to public sector organisations **to ensure that they can have access to translation and interpretation** where this is a necessary part of their work.
- (7) Steps should also be taken to identify whether additional resources could be made available nationally or locally **to allow individuals and community groups to obtain interpretation services** where these are required as part of the process of facilitating community development and integration.
- (8) A **national certification body for interpreters and translators** should be established.
 - This body should take the lead in the development and monitoring of standards and play a part in developing a better understanding of the professional standing of interpreters and translators.
 - A Scottish register of interpreters and translators accessible to commissioning organisations should be developed.
 - A list of “stand-by” interpreters (who are qualified and experienced, but who work in other areas, and for employers who may be prepared to release them in emergency situations) should be developed.
 - One of the key functions of such a national body would be to increase standards. There is a need, however, to ensure that the contribution which interpreting and translating work is making to the social and economic integration of refugees is not lost, and that any approach to, for example, certification, is inclusive.

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- (9) There is an urgent need for the development of **guidance to public sector organisations on the use of interpreters** (particularly) and for the training of staff specifically in working with interpreters (in mainstream and emergency settings).
- (10) Good practice guidance should be developed on **the most effective means for public agencies to communicate with target audiences**, including the use of oral and written translation, partial and summary translations, telephone helplines, the use of tapes, and the use of cascading briefings as well as the use of new technology.

Key Actions : Information and Advice

- (11) A team should be created within a specific organisation or specific posts and budgets identified within a number of organisations charged with:
 - **Delivering appropriate training** on legal, rights and support issues to organisations delivering advice, information and signposting services.
 - **Developing networking** activity between such organisations.
 - Facilitating the **dissemination of information** on current legal, support and rights issues, and changes to relevant legislation, as well as the **sharing of best practice**.
 - Supporting the development of sufficiently funded **local, city-wide and council-wide strategies** to meet advice, information and signposting needs, ensuring the provision of seamless services, with access to expert services where required.
 - Supporting the development of resources which **assist asylum seekers and refugees to self refer** to services.
 - **Developing the capacity of organisations outwith major dispersal and settlement areas** to meet the advice and information needs of asylum seekers and refugees.
- (12) Government agencies and departments working with asylum seekers and refugees must **audit the quality and appropriateness of their work** with the service user group. Particular attention should be paid to assessing the skills, knowledge and awareness of frontline staff. **Training and awareness raising** should be undertaken based on needs identified in the audit.

Key Actions : Community Preparation

- (13) The Home Office and NASS should **provide information to communities in advance of dispersal**, and ongoing planning information should be maintained and shared by service providers.
- (14) Public and voluntary sector organisations and local networks should undertake **proactive work to stimulate and support a range of types of activities to promote integration** in the local community, including the development of services and, for example, social, cultural and sporting activities.
- (15) Partnerships, which are properly funded and involve all stakeholders, should take a strategic approach to **supporting front line staff and volunteers** from the start of the process of preparation for integration.

Key Actions : Positive Images, Community Development and the Media

- (16) **National and local politicians should take a key role in promoting refugee integration**, targeting key opinion formers in the media and giving a coherent and appropriate message which is based on the content of the SRIF Action Plan.
- (17) **The Media Sub-Group of the Scottish Asylum Seekers' Consortium should be developed, enhanced and resourced**, with participation and support from the Scottish Executive to take forward the media strategy set out in full in the supporting document.
- (18) The Scottish Executive should commission follow-up and further **attitudinal research** (building upon research undertaken to support the anti-racism campaign), including exploration of issues affecting refugees. This research should involve ongoing media monitoring of refugee issues.
- (19) The **Framework for Dialogue process** should be continued to enable sustainable input from refugees. Organisations should:
 - Develop structures and mechanisms to allow continuing dialogue to take place.
 - Build the capacity of new and existing groups and services to engage in dialogue.
 - Develop citizenship education and work with the existing community.
 - Ensure that refugees are aware of their rights and have appropriate information.
 - Allocate appropriate resources (financial and other) to enable this community development work to take place.

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- (20) A short piece of research should be commissioned by the Scottish Executive to **identify the statistical and demographic information which is currently gathered by different services**. The indicative information gathered should then be used to inform community development and service planning (generally), as well as to project the likely need for particular services.
- (21) **Community planning partnerships in areas of resettlement must make refugee issues an integral part of their work**. They should:
- Take action to promote the integration of a range of groups (including faith communities).
 - Develop and build the capacity of existing/emerging groups.
 - Develop and examine the resources required for integration at a local level.
 - Strengthen local networks.
 - Improve consultation and planning at a local level.
 - Develop the capacity of existing services and enable people to access these services.
 - Emphasise the importance of the whole community enjoying life together through music, culture and sport, as well as recognising the importance of developing services.

Key Actions : Housing

- (22) A pathfinder project should be designed and developed in Glasgow to ensure that all people have **access to independent support, advice and advocacy, to enable them to access appropriate housing**. The project should provide “floating” support in the form of a proactive outreach service to people who receive positive decisions. This should be funded through “Supporting People” in this year’s programme, and should be evaluated.
- (23) All housing legislation and guidance should be proofed to take account of the barriers which refugees face, and housing services should ensure that issues relating to refugees are mainstreamed. To facilitate this, a checklist of potential evidence of mainstreaming and proofing should be prepared, which might include examples such as:
- The new Code of Guidance should refer specifically to refugees and should identify them as a vulnerable group in priority need.
 - The Code of Guidance should reflect that refugees should not be deemed to have a local connection with their dispersal area.

- Homelessness and housing strategies should include reference to refugees and should be assessed by the Scottish Executive on the degree to which they do so.
 - Refugees should be given more than one offer of housing and the offers made should be reasonable and appropriate, with, as the Homelessness Task Force suggests, all reasonable efforts made to meet the preferences of the person concerned. The Scottish Executive should take steps to identify that this is being implemented.
 - Temporary housing should not be used for permanent rehousing unless, following assessment and information, a refugee has expressed a preference for this. The Scottish Executive should take steps to identify that this is being implemented.
 - Communities Scotland should seek the views of expert groups about the relevance of refugee issues in local authority areas identified for inspection.
- (24) The Scottish Executive should commission a third party to develop a report which will **outline a basic service specification** of what should be expected in the provision of housing support and services to refugees. (This should include the identification of practice points and issues.) This should be followed by an assessment of current provision, with a 12-month follow-up study being undertaken to highlight developments undertaken and further actions required.
- (25) Ongoing work should be undertaken to ensure that services are provided to meet refugees' needs in all relevant parts of Scotland, and that these are fully funded, comprehensive and appropriate.
- (26) All local authorities and housing associations should ensure that their housing advice, information and allocation policies, procedures and practices take account fully of the rights and needs of refugees. These services must be fully accessible to refugees, and staff should be provided with appropriate training and guidance to ensure that provision is based on a thorough understanding of the issues.
- (27) Every refugee, on being granted refugee status, should have sufficient **information provided to them to enable them to understand the housing and welfare benefits systems**. Such information should be an integral part of provision within any "Welcome Pack". Information should be made available in appropriate languages and in a range of formats (including verbal, written and internet-based information).

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Key Actions : Justice, Community Safety and Access to Justice

- (28) The needs of asylum seekers and refugees must be recognised and considered by all institutions engaged in the civil and criminal justice system and involved in the provision of legal advice and representation. The Forum expects that all institutions will assess the relevance of all functions, services and policies in relation to ethnic minority communities and refugees in particular where appropriate within the framework of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. We expect this process to be demonstrated in community planning and reflected in minutes, reports and action plans.
- (29) The operation of the **regulations governing advice and assistance should be reviewed by the Scottish Executive**, in consultation with the Scottish Legal Aid Board, the Law Society and specialist practitioners, to ensure that they adequately reflect the work involved in dealing with asylum applications. Such a review should be completed within four months; and if changes to the regulations are considered necessary, they should be drawn up and put before Parliament as soon as possible thereafter.
- (30) The Scottish Executive, the Law Society and the Scottish Refugee Council should work together to identify funding, through the Scottish Executive, if necessary, **to deliver this expert training in asylum and immigration law in Scotland** for as long as those seeking refugee status continue to be dispersed to Scotland. This training should commence as soon as possible and certainly no later than March 2003.
- (31) It is recommended that each local authority area within Scotland should, in the building and implementation of its race equality scheme, **prioritise a review of mainstream advice agencies** to ensure that those agencies can and do access training in relation to translation and interpretation, specialist areas of the law and responding to diversity, and ensure that these agencies can access and fund interpreting and translation facilities. This, with the local authority's assistance, should/may become a condition of funding in furtherance of the authority's duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. The review should also recognise the vulnerability of particular groups seeking advice, such as women and young people, and the benefits of accessing a comprehensive service within one setting. Promotion of such services should be developed to increase accessibility of all ethnic minority communities, including refugees.

- (32) **A pilot community advocacy project should be developed and implemented** in an urban location with a sizeable refugee community. This pilot should be developed and funded by the Scottish Executive with a view to implementation in January 2004. It should be monitored and evaluated with an view to rolling it out to other areas.
- (33) The safety of refugee communities should be mainstreamed into community safety partnerships across Scotland and built in to the community planning process. It is recommended that all local authorities should be required to produce **joint multi-agency strategies for dealing with racially motivated crime** through their community safety partnerships. Multi-agency forums should be set up, where not already in place, to take this strategy forward. The strategy should include arrangements for the joint monitoring of racist incidents. It should also take account of the Guidance on the Reporting and Recording of Racist Incidents which the Scottish Executive plans to issue before the end of 2002 (although in the interim the Scottish guidance provided on RaceActionNet may be helpful). Incidents reported to any of the participating services, including housing and schools should be considered. It is expected that all local authorities in Scotland will have in place the above arrangements by 30 September 2003 and will put in place an evaluation system which monitors outcomes, including the victim's perspective, and reports on an annual basis through the Community Safety Partnership.
- (34) In recognition of the need to address the behaviour of the perpetrators of race-related offending, it is recommended that, in the first instance, the Scottish Executive commission work to identify potential **pilot projects which tackle racially motivated behaviour among young people**. (This work should consider projects which are already underway in Glasgow and elsewhere working with adult offenders who have committed racially motivated crimes, as well as the extent to which measures focused on young people could be incorporated within elements of the 10-point Youth Crime Action Plan which Ministers announced in July 2002.) This preparatory work should be completed by early 2003, with pilot projects being developed for implementation from June 2003.

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Key Actions : Children's Services

- (35) All **Children's Services Plans should take account of the specific issues facing asylum seekers and refugees**, particularly in relation to addressing racism, and ensure that the needs of those in vulnerable groups (for example those children that are unaccompanied or looked after, have particular support needs or physical or mental health issues) are properly identified and addressed.
- (36) **Asylum seekers and refugees must be properly consulted** during the process of the development of Children's Services Plan (and any other strategies or action plans which impact upon them).
- (37) The Scottish Executive should consider funding a pilot project to allow **the development of "children's support plans"**. These plans would build on the experience of individual education plans, would be developed by young asylum seekers and refugees themselves (supported by staff), and would cover in- and out-of-school services. One advantage of this approach would be to assist children's services providers to identify where their services are not meeting the demands of children.
- (38) The Scottish Executive should prepare guidance for the range of bodies which sponsor or accredit training in Scotland to ensure that **anti-racist approaches**, and the specific needs of asylum seekers and refugees, are included in all basic training, induction training and on-going staff development. It is essential that this guidance is comprehensive in its distribution, covering all aspects of children's services, and all staff involved in their delivery.
- (39) Children's services agencies should audit, and if necessary, revise current provision to parents and children to ensure that **information is accessible, comprehensive, readily understood and accurate**, and that it is being received and used by asylum seekers and refugees. Local information on services should complement that produced nationally by the Scottish Executive.
- (40) The Scottish Executive should consider ways to improve the **supply of EAL and bilingual teachers**, and should give consideration to how best to develop and implement a quality assurance framework and accreditation.
- (41) In recognition of the central role of schools in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, the Scottish Executive should consider commissioning research **to identify and disseminate good practice** in preparing School Boards, staff, children and parents for the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees.

- (42) There is a need for the Scottish Executive (and Home Office) to **identify and address a number of urgent funding, legal and policy issues**. (A range of issues were identified by the group, including, for example, clarifying the relative provisions of the Children (Scotland) Act and UK Immigration legislation, providing additional guidance on the duties of agencies under the Children (Scotland) Act, ensuring parity between Scotland and England and Wales in relation to the support available to public agencies and the measurement of school performance. This is not a comprehensive list, and it is important to stress that a comprehensive assessment, rather than a response to these points, is required.)

Key Actions : Health and Social Care

- (43) Given the health needs of asylum seekers and the requirement to invest in securing their access to services (through the provision of interpreters, extended consultation periods etc) there are significant additional costs in providing appropriate health and social care for these groups. Due responsibilities and mechanisms for allocating resources to enable appropriate local service developments – across NASS, the Scottish Executive, Health Boards, Health Trusts etc – need to be clarified.
- (44) The Scottish Executive, working with the Ethnic Minority Resource Centre, should address the apparent barrier to accessing services for asylum seekers and refugees by **ensuring that there is adequate information available about health and social care services** in accessible and readily understood formats. This should be complemented by information made available by service providers about local services.
- (45) There is a need for a substantial programme of **awareness raising for health and social care professionals** within the overall framework of the implementation of Fair for All and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
- (46) There is a need for the development of **core information and guidance** to allow health and social care professionals to deliver an appropriate service to asylum seekers and refugees. (Examples of this could include information about cultural norms with respect to bereavement, the provision of appropriate foods, and guidance on the use of interpreters.) Where necessary, this should be supplemented by appropriate training.
- (47) There is a need to **document and disseminate the lessons from the approach taken by service providers in Glasgow** (and, where relevant, in other areas within the UK) to the provision

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of services for asylum seekers and refugees, particularly in identifying means of planning and delivering services in an integrated manner. Specific consideration should be given to identifying good practice and developing guidance for areas with low, as well as high concentrations of asylum seekers and refugees.

- (48) Given evidence that the sharing of information between service providers has been an important factor in shaping the development of effective services for asylum seekers and refugees, the Scottish Executive should consider the development of **guidance for all agencies on effective and appropriate means of sharing such information**. This guidance should balance the need for information for shared planning with the need for patient confidentiality.
- (49) It is important to ensure that service planning takes full account of the particular **needs of refugees who have been in this country for many years**, and whose needs have historically not been fully acknowledged.

Key Actions : Enterprise, Lifelong Learning, Employment and Training

- (50) The Scottish Executive should take the lead (working with all interested parties) in the development of a **national strategy for ESOL**, building on the recently published adult literacy strategy. While this work is being undertaken, the Scottish Executive should consider the use of pathfinder resources to test a range of alternative approaches to current provision.
- (51) Prior to the agreement of a national strategy, there is an urgent need for **adequate resources to be made available to support the provision of English language tuition** (both on a stand-alone basis and in conjunction with vocational courses) for those asylum seekers and refugees who require it, to allow them to integrate as quickly as possible. Given the current zero growth in overall funding for further education, this will require the Scottish Executive to provide *additional* monies to colleges to support this work. The increased resources will be required not only in teaching, but also in support services and childcare.
- (52) Asylum seekers should be allowed **access to part-time Higher National courses** on the same basis as currently applies for non-advanced courses. This provision should be met from within existing resources.

- (53) There should be more progress on recognising the **qualifications and/or experience of asylum seekers and refugees and on providing conversion courses and competence testing where appropriate**. This should proceed on two levels: first, through funding to assist SQA, other awarding bodies, professional bodies and sector skills councils to find ways of recognising qualifications and/or experience, and secondly, through the development of appropriate provision within colleges and universities (with the use of pilot projects in the first instance where appropriate).
- (54) Service providers should **audit existing adult literacy, work experience, New Deal and other employment and training programmes** to ensure that these are meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Where necessary, programmes should be customised or new provision developed, to meet these needs.
- (55) There is a need for **comprehensive information to be provided on education, lifelong learning and training issues** to both asylum seekers and refugees, and intermediaries, particularly relating to eligibility, funding support, fee levels and the appropriateness of the provision. This provision should supplement, rather than duplicate, information available from, for example, Careers Scotland.
- (56) There is a need to **identify and target barriers preventing asylum seekers and refugees moving into employment**. It is suggested that Scottish Enterprise, working with the Scottish Executive, the Department of Work and Pensions and business groups, should undertake a piece of research to both identify the barriers which currently exist, and solutions which will address these. In the meantime, the group has identified two priority actions. The first is that the Scottish Executive should make representations to the Home Office to seek a resolution to the identified problem of the provision of documentation which unequivocally establishes the right of an asylum seeker or refugee to work. The second is that the Scottish Executive, working with Scottish Enterprise and business group such as Scottish Chambers of Commerce, should provide employers in both public and private sector with clear guidance on the legal position in relation to the employment of asylum seekers and refugees. This guidance should also stress the business and wider benefits of employing asylum seekers and refugees.

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