



Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper

Template Response for Local Groups Supporting Refugees & People Seeking Asylum

Background to the consultation:

The [Integrated Communities Green Paper](#) sets out the government's vision for building strong and integrated communities, and proposes a number of actions to deliver this at a local and national level. The Government is now consulting on the content of the paper and inviting individuals, communities and organisations to share their thoughts on the most effective ways to address integration challenges.

This consultation offers an opportunity for local actors to ensure that local experiences of bringing together refugees and people seeking asylum with resident communities are reflected in the final strategy. Indeed, the Government has committed to *“work with civil society and others to increase integration support available to those recognised as refugees after arrival in the UK.”*

It has also set out a new localised approach which prioritizes local integration strategies featuring tailored actions to address challenges specific to the local area. These strategies will need to be built on existing good practice at a local level, as well as local knowledge and expertise.

Your input is crucial:

As voluntary organisations working on the front-lines of local communities to support refugees and people seeking asylum, it is particularly important for Government to hear from you. This can include information on the barriers to integration for the people you support and the programmes or initiatives you've witnessed or been part of that have successfully overcome these barriers. We also believe it is an opportunity to acknowledge the social and economic value of refugee integration and to make the case for a comprehensive refugee integration package.

To support you in pulling together a response, Asylum Matters has drafted some key messages and suggested which types of case studies or examples might be useful to include in response to the questions in the consultation. It is important to note that we have focused on the particular circumstances of refugees and people seeking asylum, but of course the scope of the consultation is much broader, and you are welcome to write about various groups in your community.

How to respond to the consultation:

You can find details on how to respond to the questions [here](#) – which involves either responding via an online form or completing a response form and emailing it to the address provided. Our template will help you to do this though you don't need to include all suggested messages and should consider the top 1 – 2 messages or recommendations you'd like to get across and ensure they feature prominently in your submission. There is no need to answer all questions in the consultation (if pressed for time, consider answering only questions 1 – 5).

The deadline for responses is 23:45 on Tuesday 5th June 2018. If you have any questions please feel free to get in touch with Andrea at Asylum Matters: andrea@asylummatters.org. If you do put in a submission with the help of this template, we would be grateful if you could let us know.

Not able to put in a submission?

If you're not able to put in a submission but have thoughts you'd like to contribute or examples of best practice in your local community, do share them and we can ensure they go into the Asylum Matters submission.

INTRODUCTION

Background: This section of the *Integrated Communities Green Paper* sets out the vision for building integrated communities and the challenges including: the level and pace of migration, school and residential segregation, labour market disadvantage, lack of English proficiency, personal, religious and cultural norms, values and attitudes, and lack of meaningful social mixing. The Government commits to building on good practice of initiatives that are making an impact on integrating communities. It also sets out a new localised approach which will initially be trialled in five areas (Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Peterborough, Walsall, Waltham Forest). Learnings from these areas and what works and doesn't work will inform other local strategies.

Question 1: We define integrated communities as communities where people - whatever their background - live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Do you agree with our definition?

Suggested Messages:

- **Refugees in the UK are often eager to restart their lives and achieve their full potential**, so that they are able to contribute to the community, meet their responsibilities and access the services to which they are entitled.
- **Despite their willingness to integrate, refugees often face a number of barriers to integration**, which mean they will need additional, tailored support to achieve their potential, economically, culturally and in terms of social inclusion.
- While the strategy focuses on the symptoms of integration problems (ie segregation, labour market disadvantage, lack of social mixing), it is important to consider the barriers to effective integration (ie deprivation and discrimination), both for refugees and other groups.
- **Some of the main structural barriers that currently prevent refugees from achieving their full potential can include:**
 - **Experiences of destitution:** New refugees who have been through the asylum route will often have spent months or even years subsisting on shockingly low levels of asylum support. The experience of living in poverty, coupled with uncertainty about the future has a negative impact on many refugees' physical and mental wellbeing, which hinders their ability to integrate after gaining status. In addition, many new refugees struggle to access mainstream benefits or start working within the 28-day move-on period after which their asylum support is cut off. That means that the first experiences of many refugees in the UK will be of destitution and homelessness.
 - **Isolation and segregation from local communities:** Low asylum support levels, which prevent people from engaging in social, cultural, or religious activities, coupled with a prohibition to work mean that many asylum-seekers have little opportunity to engage in 'social mixing.' These experiences of isolation over months and even years mean it will often take new refugees much longer to embed in their communities once they receive status.
 - **Exclusion from the labour market:** As people seeking asylum are unable to work while they wait for a decision on their claim, many will become de-skilled and lose confidence which hinders their ability to gain employment once they receive status.
 - **Discrimination:** People going through the asylum system can face discrimination and even abuse in their local communities. Given they are often dispersed to more deprived areas, where housing stock is the cheapest, they can be viewed by local residents as competition for already strained public services. At times, asylum accommodation is easily recognisable and residents have received verbal and even physical threats and abuse.
 - **Hostile Environment:** While recent immigration legislation (ie right to rent, healthcare charging, etc) does not apply to refugees, it has a negative effect on refugees' ability to access services. For example, given a lack of documentation or

lack of confidence to advocate for themselves, many refugees will face difficulty in opening bank accounts, accessing accommodation, or proving entitlement to free healthcare. This negatively impacts on their ability to access the services to which they are entitled.

- **The Government should work across Departments to regularly review how its policies are affecting onward integration for new refugees and work pro-actively to remove any structural barriers to integration.**

Local info & examples to include:

- Consider what effective integration means in your local community. How would the refugees and people seeking asylum that you work with define successful integration?
- What are the main barriers they face to becoming active members of their communities? Do you have any case studies that highlight some of the barriers outlined above?

Question 2: We believe that the varied nature and scale of integration challenges means that tailored local plans and interventions are needed to tackle the issues specific to particular places. Do you agree?

Suggested Messages:

- **The localised approach to integration is welcome** as local actors will be best equipped to identify the strategies needed to address challenges specific to the local area.
- **Local authorities and other local actors are already involved in the design and delivery of integration support and services for resettled refugees in their local area**, for which they receive funding and assistance from Central Government. However, **local authorities are not resourced to offer similar services to refugees who have come through the asylum route**, even though their buy-in to the dispersal scheme is essential to ensure a functioning asylum system and a fair distribution of responsibility for people seeking protection.
- In addition, **local authorities who do opt into asylum dispersal are effectively cut out of the procurement and planning of asylum accommodation in their local areas**, which is managed by national housing providers. **Their exclusion from this process can pose risks to social cohesion and integration and cause a strain on the capacity of local services.**
- Recent initiatives like the introduction of Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Officers (LAASLOs) in some areas which aim to support people post-decision could be a welcome model that provides resource and oversight to the Local Authority.
- **This and other initiatives aimed at ensuring local knowledge and expertise is properly harnessed should be featured in local integration plans and resourced accordingly by the Government.**
- More broadly, **to ensure continued and expanded support for dispersal by local authorities, it is important to review the different schemes that local authorities are invited to take part in and the different levels of funding they come with**, which can lead to different integration outcomes for the refugees in their care.

Local information/ examples to include:

- In this section you can include information about the number of resettled refugees and dispersed asylum seekers in your local area. You can find that information in the [most recent asylum statistics](#), in particular 'Asylum data tables volume 4', which shows asylum seekers in receipt of section 95 support by local authority at the end of 2017, as well as the number of refugees resettled to local authorities in each quarter of 2017.
- You can consider the impact of this on your local community and what the Government can do to ensure that local actors are empowered and resourced to deliver local integration plans.

Question 3: Do you have any examples of successful approaches to encourage integration that you wish to highlight, particularly approaches which have been subject to evaluation?

- **This is the best place to include examples of services, events, initiatives, and general approaches to integrating new refugees that you think have worked particularly well in your local area.** This can cover a range of areas such as: employment or training support, English classes or conversation clubs, caseworker support or befriending schemes, advice to new refugees in the move-on period, to name only a few.
- In addition to outlining the purpose of the scheme/ service, you could consider mentioning:
 - Which stakeholders were responsible for the delivery of this service? How did they work together to ensure effective delivery? (*ie voluntary sector, private sector, local government, refugees themselves, host communities, etc*)
 - How do you know the approach was particularly successful? What did you learn? (*ie include any info from formal evaluations, feedback from beneficiaries, data or anecdotes on people supported and their outcomes*)
 - What challenges did you face? What can Central Government do to support similar local initiatives? (*ie funding support, reconsider national policies that undermine these initiatives*)

CHAPTER 1: STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP

Background: *This chapter of the Integrated Communities Green Paper notes that “real leaders – “changemakers” as we have heard them to be called – are not always those in positions of authority. Indeed, some of the people who influence others by example and bring about change would not identify themselves as leaders. Some voices are too seldom heard, especially those of women and young people. This can significantly hinder integration.” The Government commits to build the capacity of leaders and share learning.*

Question 4: The Green Paper proposes that we need to build the capacity of our leaders to promote and achieve integration outcomes. Do you agree?

- **Among the leaders or changemakers who have promoted the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum are often refugee-led community organisations that can play a crucial role in facilitating integration, but funding cuts can mean that they often don’t have the resources or support to sustain their work.**
- In this section you can consider:
 - Who are these changemakers? What have they done to bring together refugee communities with other local residents?
 - How can they be supported by government to increase their capacity and their ability to make a difference in a more meaningful way?

CHAPTER 2: SUPPORTING NEW MIGRANTS AND RESIDENT COMMUNITIES

Background: *This chapter includes a section titled ‘Supporting refugees to integrate’ which notes that while resettled refugees receive a comprehensive package of support to help them rebuild their lives in the UK, this package is currently not available to refugees who have gone through the asylum process. However, it is significant that in the strategy there is a commitment to “work with civil society and others to increase integration support available to those recognised as refugees after arrival in the UK.” Your response can consider the importance of ensuring integration opportunities for all refugees regardless of how they arrived in the UK, the barriers that you see to effective integration and the key components of what an integration package should include.*

Question 5: The Green Paper proposes measures to support recent migrants so that they have the information they need to integrate into society and understand British values and their rights and responsibilities. Do you agree with this approach?

Key messages:

- The commitment to ensure that integration support is available to all refugees, including those recognized as refugees after arrival in the UK, is very welcome. In the last few years, **funding for programmes which facilitate the integration of refugees who have not been resettled to the UK has either been substantially cut or withdrawn completely.** The APPG for refugees noted in their [‘Refugees Welcome?’ report](#) from April 2017 that this has resulted in a **two-tier system for refugees** who have gone through the resettlement route and the asylum system.
- In many cases **voluntary organisations and local authorities have stepped in to fill the gap and provide support services**, but even these have been dramatically reduced over the years due to funding constraints. The result has been that many new refugees have not received any significant integration support.
- **Increased integration support should come in the form of an integration package for all refugees**, to include:
 - **A dedicated caseworker:** Caseworkers, working in partnership with mainstream service providers, have been a successful part of all recent refugee integration strategies, including Sunrise, RIES, the Gateway programme and the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).
 - **Employment & Training Support:** All refugees should have access to employment advice services (see question 11).
 - **ESOL Provision:** All refugees and asylum seekers should have access to free English language learning (see question 9).
 - **End-to-End Support:** In previous research, the Home Office had identified the 28-day period after being granted status as critical to a successful integration strategy and stressed the importance of providing intensive one-to-one caseworker support during this time. If gaps in support continue despite procedural improvements to the transition process, the length of the move on period should be extended to reflect the reality of how long it takes to access financial support and accommodation.

Question 6: The Controlling Migration Fund was constructed to deal with the short-term migration pressures and associated costs that local authorities can encounter. Do you think it adequately achieves this objective?

Key Messages:

- Information on the Controlling Migration Fund and recent allocation of funding can be found [here](#). It is welcome that the **Fund has recognised the need “to help English local authorities and their communities experiencing high and unexpected volumes of immigration to ease pressures on local services.”**
- However, **the secondary aim of the fund to support local authorities with “direct[ing] enforcement action against people in the UK illegally in order to reduce pressure on local areas” could undermine the trust that migrants and refugees have in local services.** For example, it is now common practice for Home Office enforcement officers to be embedded in local authority homelessness and social work teams. This can make refugees who have had negative experiences of engaging with the Home Office while in the asylum system reluctant to seek help from local authority services, which in turn may undermine their chances of integrating successfully.

CHAPTER 3: EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Background: The strategy notes that all children and young people should receive a good education in a safe environment, be taught about fundamental British values, and have the opportunity to mix with people from different backgrounds.

Question 7: The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds. Do you agree with this approach?

Suggested Messages

- It is crucial that children and young people seeking sanctuary in the UK are able to access a good education, learn about British values and engage with others from different backgrounds.
- For many children, their education will have been disrupted after months or years of displacement, so may face additional challenges settling into their new schools, adapting to the British curriculum and overcoming language and cultural barriers. **There is currently inadequate provision and support for children who arrive late in the academic year. They should receive an individualised assessment to look at alternative or compressed programmes and tailored support.**
- In addition, it is important to consider that for many children who are going through the asylum process, **the experience of destitution can undermine their ability to achieve their full educational potential and interact with others from different backgrounds.**
- To address the needs of children from refugee and asylum-seeking families and support them to settle, learn and integrate, they will often need more than just academic support. There are a number of initiatives being delivered by voluntary agencies, local authorities, and schools across the country to achieve this, from welcoming children to school and offering peer support and supporting emotional needs, to English classes, conversation and homework clubs, and specialist staff training.

Local information/ examples to include:

- Here you can include **examples of how local actors have come together to support children and young people from refugee and asylum-seeking families to access and navigate the education system**, as well as creating opportunities for them to mix with others in their community outside of school.
- Which programmes or initiatives were most effective? Did the children and young people face any barriers to accessing education and social mixing outside of school settings? What can the Government do to facilitate this and support local programmes that are delivering their vision?

Question 8: The Green Paper sets out proposals to support parents with their choice of out-of-school education settings. Do you agree with this approach?

We have not suggested a response to this question.

CHAPTER 4: BOOSTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Background: The strategy sets out a vision where “everyone living in England should be able to speak and understand English so they can integrate into life in this country by getting a job or improving their prospects at work, accessing and making good use of local services, becoming part of community life and making friendships with people from different backgrounds.” The Government outlined its commitment to support English language learning, including for vulnerable persons, but did not announce any new investment in accredited lessons.

Question 9 (a): The Green Paper proposes a number of measures to improve the offer for people to learn English. Do you agree with this approach? **(b)** Do you have any other suggestions on how we can improve the offer for people to learn English?

Suggested Messages:

- **Participation in intensive language courses at the earliest opportunity is integral to successful integration** as without English, refugees are unable to find work, study, volunteer, access local services and understand their rights.
- **While refugees in England are eligible for fully-funded provision, they face numerous barriers to accessing English classes** including long waiting lists, gender barriers, distance of colleges, and short learning hours in the classroom ([see Refugee Action report on the topic](#)).
- **A fund to specifically support refugees and their dependents learning English is needed** to ensure all new refugees have the tools they need to fully integrate.
- **Asylum-seekers should also have the right to access free English language learning from the point they make an asylum claim** as early access will be the most cost-effective approach in the long term.

Local information/ examples to include:

- **Here you can include examples of initiatives in your community that have helped refugees learn English**, whether they are English classes, conversation clubs, or other activities that promote communication.
- **You can mention the barriers that new refugees and people seeking asylum face in learning English and accessing accredited English language courses**, and consider what the Government could do to remove these barriers.
- You could **consider the importance of providing free classes to asylum-seekers** so that they have the opportunity to learn English as soon as they put in their asylum claim.

CHAPTER 5: PLACES AND COMMUNITY

Question 10: The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that people, particularly those living in residentially segregated communities, have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds and play a part in civic life. Do you agree with this approach?

We have not suggested a response to this question.

CHAPTER 6: INCREASING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Background: The Government's vision is for "a transformed economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK," including "promoting good jobs and opportunities for people to reach their full potential." The DWP will be building capacity across Jobcentre Plus to understand the needs and challenges in local areas and to work with employers, local authorities, and other partners to ensure support and opportunities for disadvantaged people. In the five integration areas there will be additional funding to identify the approaches that work best to bring in communities traditionally furthest from the labour market and determine if these can be rolled out more widely.

Question 11: The Green Paper proposes measures to provide tailored support to people, especially those who may not currently be active in the labour market, to build their confidence and skills to take up employment. Do you agree with this approach?

Suggested Messages:

- **Refugees, both those who have been resettled to the UK and those who have been through the asylum system, will often need tailored support to be able to access the job**

market. The Syrian Resettlement Programme requires local authorities to support refugees in accessing the labour market and a number of organisations also run programmes that support refugees into employment. Previously the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) offered up to 12 months of information, advice and support into employment, such as CV-writing, qualification recognition, interview techniques, and accessing training or education.

- Since this Government-funded programme was discontinued, access to employment services for newly recognised refugees has been very limited. **Many voluntary organisations have stepped in to offer employment and training services for refugees, and Government funding to successful programmes would be welcome.**
- Existing services, such as those offered by Jobcentre staff, should be tailored to ensure refugees receive the support they may need in accessing the job market. **Guidance should be issued to Jobcentres around the country based on learnings from previous employment services for refugees and existing resettlement programmes.**
- **Increased coordination between service-providers in each area, including Jobcentres, voluntary organisations and local authorities, will help ensure best practice is shared, improve referral pathways and prevent any gaps in service.**
- In addition, **giving asylum-seekers the right to work if they have been waiting for a decision on their case for more than 6 months would help them to swiftly gain employment once their protection needs are recognised.**

Local Info & Examples to Include:

- Here you can include examples of the approaches that have worked to support refugees into work in your community.

CHAPTER 7: RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Question 12: The Green Paper proposes measures to encourage integration and resist divisive views or actions. Do you agree with this approach?

We have not suggested a response to this question.

Question 13: The Green Paper proposes measures to address practices which can impact on the rights of women. Do you agree with this approach?

We have not suggested a response to this question.

CHAPTER 8: MEASURING SUCCESS

Question 14: The Green Paper proposes core integration measures for national and local government to focus on. Do you agree these are the right measures?

- **All stakeholders responsible for the delivery of the finalised strategy should be involved in its monitoring and evaluation.** In Scotland, the New Scots Strategy will be delivered by a number of working groups set up to progress actions across the various themes of the strategy, including a ‘New Scots Evidence Group’ which will consider the best mechanism for measuring the success of the strategy.
- In previous Home Office research, indicators of successful refugee integration have been identified as: **the employment rates of refugees; the levels of English language attainment over time; the number of refugees involved in voluntary work; the numbers of refugees in touch with community organisations; the proportion of refugees taking up British citizenship; and the proportion of refugees reporting harassment.**

- However, there will be gaps in the data available to accurately report on progress against each of these metrics. In addition to considering national data, such as the annual labour force survey, the **strategy should also consult with the range of actors responsible for service-delivery to consider the best means of accessing or developing data sets to support the measurement of the impact of the strategy.**