



Project: - Integration of refugees into the European educational and labour market: Requirements for a target oriented approach (EDUASYL)

Glasgow City Report

A life in limbo: Barriers to VET and labour market integration for asylum-seekers waiting for the granting of Leave to Remain

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Introduction

After intensive research into the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers [in Glasgow] in terms of their integration into the educational and labour market, it was decided that the focus of the Glasgow city report would be specifically on asylum-seekers as the main target group. Without the decision for ‘leave to remain’, a refugee does not have ‘refugee status’ and is classified as an ‘asylum-seeker’. The consequential barriers to educational and labour market integration of this particular group are focused on along with their stress, frustration and disengagement caused by the asylum process in the UK.

Section 1 gives a brief description of the history of settlement in Glasgow by both economic migrants and refugees fleeing from oppressive regimes and wars. Section 2 details the statistic profiles of both recognized refugees and asylum-seekers. Section 3 maps formal and non-formal vocational education and training structures that can be accessed by migrants and analyses how accessible some of these are for asylum-seekers. Section 4 describes the biographies of seven refugees and explores the barriers and protective factors (external and internal) in relation to integration. Section 5 explains the 2002 Nationality and Immigration Act and its impact on asylum-seekers in terms of access to employment, in particular – an exclusive policy that goes against the grain of the inclusive ethos of the Scottish Government and formal and non-formal support networks in Glasgow. Section 6 is a case study on an example of ‘Good Practice’ and Section 7 details some recommendations from the findings of the city report.

Acknowledgement and thanks are owed to Maggie Lennon from the Bridges Programmes; Gareth Mulvey from the Scottish Refugee Council, and Rose Filippi and Remzije Sherifi from the Maryhill Integration Network who have all kindly taken time out of their busy schedules to review and give valuable feedback during the writing of the report. Acknowledgement and thanks are also owed to Paul McGill for his contribution by writing much of the report, and to Rose Filippi for arranging and interviewing refugees/asylum-seekers for the biographies – due to

the sudden and terminal illness of Pamela Clayton who, sadly, could no longer continue with this work.

1. A short history: Glasgow and the Scottish context

From the seventeenth century onwards, Glasgow has been settled by several groups of migrants. The first main group consisted of economic migrants from Ireland. In the early nineteenth century thousands of displaced Highlanders, evicted by their landlords, made their homes in Glasgow and later in the century European Jews established communities which still exist in the south of the city. After the Second World War, Indians and Pakistanis arrived and by 1971 there were about 12,000 living in Glasgow. Other newcomers included Italians, Poles and Chinese. By the 2001 census 5.5 per cent of Glasgow's residents described themselves as other than "white", of which the biggest group was of Pakistani ethnic origin. Glasgow's current population is around 578,000.

Scotland has a population of around 5.3 million. Statistics from the National Records Office Scotland indicate that the number of people living in Scotland who were born abroad has grown further recently. There was an increase in 2004 from 204,000 to 326,000 in 2010. The five most common overseas countries of birth were Poland (53,000), India (26,000), Republic of Ireland (22,000), Germany (20,000) and Pakistan (16,000). According to the Scottish Refugee Council, 18,000 asylum-seekers have been dispersed to Glasgow since 2001 and Glasgow City Council's estimated in October 2010 that there were 2,800 refugees and 3,500 asylum-seekers living in the city.

The first recognized refugees arrived in Glasgow in the late twentieth century, fleeing from oppressive regimes and wars, notably coming from Uganda, Vietnam and the Balkans. In 1999 and 2000 Glasgow participated in a short-term reception programme for refugees from Kosovo – organized by NGOs (non-governmental organizations). The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act was enacted in order to disperse asylum-seekers from London and the South-East to other regions of the United Kingdom which had more housing available. A new agency was

established, NASS (the National Asylum Support Service), which made contracts with local councils that would provide support and accommodation. In 2006 NASS ceased to exist and its functions were taken over by the UKBA (United Kingdom Border Agency). Glasgow City agreed to accept asylum-seekers in 1999 and in 2000 signed a contract with NASS to provide 6,000 accommodation units. Glasgow was to become the destination of the largest number of dispersed asylum-seekers of any single local authority in the United Kingdom¹.

2. Statistic of the target group

It must be clarified at the outset that the term ‘asylum-seeker’ refers to those (aged 18+) who have newly arrived in the country and are waiting for the decision as to whether or not they may be allowed to stay in the UK on the grounds that it would be dangerous for them to be deported. As will be shown later, the term ‘newly’ is misleading, as asylum-seekers can wait for a long time before a decision is made. The term ‘refugee’ refers to those who have been granted leave to remain in the UK and are now recognized as bona fide ‘refugees’. It is important to differentiate between the two groups [as their situations are not the same] and therefore, their statistical profile is presented by this report in the following two sub-sections.

2.1. Statistical profile of Glasgow’s refugees & others given Leave to remain

Refugees are entitled to the same rights as any United Kingdom citizen, including full access to education, housing, employment and the health service.

It is much harder to find information on refugees given permission to stay, and since individuals awarded ELR (Exceptional Leave to remain)²; HP (Humanitarian Protection) or DL (Discretionary Leave) are not tracked by the Home Office, it is difficult to know how many there are in Glasgow³. Although many do stay in Glasgow and some refugees from other cities join

¹ Source: www.icar.org.uk/?lid=9982

² ELR status no longer exists per se.

³ Source: www.icar.org.uk/?lid=9982

fellow-nationals living in close proximity in various parts of the city, for the same reason some Glasgow asylum-seekers go to other major cities once allowed so to do. The DWP reported that 2,080 refugees in Glasgow were registered job-seekers in 2005 and in 2006 there were 500 refugee children in school. Job-seekers faced considerable difficulties, despite a DWP nationwide survey showing that before arriving in the United Kingdom, nearly all refugees had formal education, over half were qualified and nearly a quarter had a degree, over 40 per cent had been employed and 17 per cent spoke English well. After arrival, 60 per cent spoke English well, largely due no doubt to their participation in ESOL classes, 15 per cent were in education (3 per cent studying for a degree) and 4 per cent were in training; but fewer than one-third were in employment, concentrated in low paid employment, with some earning below the NMW (National Minimum Wage). This was despite a hunger to work and contribute, and despite often holding highly skilled employment in their countries of origin. Many of those in employment had fixed term employment, employment via agencies and in some cases zero hours contracts. Nearly one third had undertaken voluntary work in the United Kingdom. Proficiency in English was the single most important factor in finding a job and at a decent level⁴. This latter assertion has been questioned, however, due to later research (detailed in the next paragraph), that employment outcome figures were not any higher in the sample of migrants from English speaking countries.

More up-to-date, but similar figures for Scotland – not Glasgow exclusively – have been produced by the Scottish Refugee Council's findings in 2010 of 262 questionnaire responses (as part of its ongoing longitudinal study of refugee integration). The sample includes people who arrived in 1998 through to 2010, with higher numbers responding who arrived in 2007 – 2009. Interestingly, there is a higher representation of women in the sample than of men. With regards to issues around employment, it was found that of the 262 respondents only 32 were in some form of paid employment. Large numbers were unemployed or in education: 59 were unemployed, 64 were in education and 49 were not allowed to work. Those in work tended to be in low paid, low status jobs; many worked casually with restricted hours. Ten respondents worked full-time – that is, over 30 hours per week – but only 2 people earned over £15,000 per

⁴ Source: www.asylumscotland.org.uk/asylumstatistics.php

annum and 3 people were paid under £10,000 per annum, thereby not achieving the national minimum wage. About 71% of the respondents had worked in their country of origin; the contrast between the occupations that they had had and the jobs they were doing now highlighted that underemployment was high. For example, one woman working as a cleaner used to be a teaching assistant; a few care assistants used to be teachers; a postal worker used to be a silk screen printer⁵.

The new government Work Programme (launched across the UK in June 2011) for those registered unemployed (and are therefore on Job-Seekers Allowance) for more than twelve months has not helped those refugees attending the programme who need specialist support away from this mainstream provision and who are now denied access to those parts of the Bridges Programmes⁶ training opportunities which are funded by the European Social Fund (ESF)⁷. The Scottish Refugee Council also has a service for refugees funded by ESF and so the same restrictions apply to them. The Work Programme is a serious barrier to specialist intervention support despite the fact specialist interventions are the ones that work. The consequences are that refugees are more likely to be left with low-skilled, low-paid jobs.⁸

Since educational institutions do not normally collect information about the status of their students in terms of whether they are refugees or not, it is not possible to know how many have entered vocational training in the formal sector. Finance (e.g. for travel costs and learning materials) and childcare have been identified by the Scottish Refugee Council as the major barriers to entry into full-time education.

2.2. Statistical profile of Glasgow's asylum-seekers

⁵ Source: Mulvey (2011)

⁶ See Best Practice, Section 6 of this report for information on the Bridges Programmes.

⁷ This is because the ESF funding cannot be used to help people who are on other funded schemes, such as the Work Programme.

⁸ Sources: Maggie Lennon (Director of Bridges Programmes) and <http://www.bridgesprogrammes.org.uk>

Although there are barriers to integration into VET and the labour market for people with refugee status in Glasgow (as aforementioned), the focus of this report is on the difficulties faced in particular by asylum-seekers due to a legal framework that denies them access to employment and full-time vocational training and education; thereby making integration into Glaswegian society a lot more difficult.

Surveys of asylum-seekers were carried out in 2006 and 2008. The 2006 survey was carried out by COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and data is also included from a DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) survey and a Scottish Refugee Council report. The 2008 survey was reported by ICAR (Information Centre about Asylum-Seekers and Refugees). Over 5,000 asylum-seekers were living in Scotland in August 2006, of which all but 82, who were living with friends or relatives elsewhere, were in Glasgow, whose total population was 578,800. According to Home Office figures, almost half came from six countries: Iran, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Turkey and Iraq. Other notable countries of origin included Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, China, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Zimbabwe. Just under a quarter came from a mixture of other countries. There were over 1,500 children attending school in Glasgow, of whom two-thirds were in primary school. Until 2006 all dispersed asylum-seekers lived in Glasgow City Council property, but this was changed in that year. Fourth-fifths were living in GHA (Glasgow Housing Association) property under contract to Glasgow City Council property while the rest were housed by the YMCA (now known as Ypeople), Glasgow and the Angel Group. Although scattered around the city, the majority lived in a relatively small number of neighbourhoods. Despite NASS support for those whose claims were under consideration, there were at least 154 destitute asylum-seekers and refugees, including dependent children, recorded by the Scottish Refugee Council⁹.

In 2008 Glasgow was still the city with the largest number of dispersed asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom and although the national composition was similar there appears to have been greater geographical concentration. The majority now lived in Sighthill, in the north of the city. In January 2008 there were 3,913 asylum-seekers receiving accommodation and support; 606

⁹ Source: www.asylumscotland.org.uk/asylumstatistics.php

failed applicants receiving support; and 55 receiving subsistence only. The numbers in all categories had fallen since 2005. The biggest national group receiving full support was now from Turkey¹⁰. In November 2010 the UKBA cancelled its contract with Glasgow City Council on the grounds of cost and stated its intention to give accommodation contracts to the private and voluntary sectors. However, in November 2011 the housing contract was given to the private company Serco Limited (Serco Civil Government) for Scotland and Northern Ireland (and they are not obliged to provide housing for failed asylum-seekers).

Asylum-seekers do not have the right to take up paid employment opportunities or full-time vocational education or training (16+ hours per week) that leads towards formal qualifications. The main options therefore are ESOL learning and voluntary work. While these can be helpful routes towards future employment should they be granted leave to remain, many asylum-seekers find it difficult to secure suitable voluntary work, and some may even find difficulties finding suitable ESOL provision, as was found in the research interviews with a sample of asylum-seekers (see the biographies). Additionally, demand for ESOL classes far outstrips provision, with a current waiting list of 900 – 1,000 across the city, according to Maggie Lennon, director of the Bridges Programmes¹¹, who stated that the impact of this means that asylum-seekers whose English level is low cannot access vocational programmes (for health and safety reasons). Furthermore, many ESOL classes take place in the afternoon and this is not suitable for those with children. To exacerbate the situation even further, there is more uncertainty about ESOL provision (along with other learning provision) as colleges in Glasgow are facing cuts and having to look at merging together – as is the case for Anniesland, Cardonald, and Langside Colleges. There are also cuts in community-based ESOL provision. Often the voluntary work that asylum-seekers are able to take up is based with projects aimed at helping asylum-seekers in Glasgow. Therefore, opportunities to integrate with the wider community are restricted.

The process of seeking asylum and refugee status can be time-consuming and stressful, as confirmed in interviews with asylum-seekers and refugees in Glasgow. Asylum-seekers have

¹⁰ Source: www.icar.org.uk/?lid=9982

¹¹ See Best Practice, section 6 of this report for more information on the Bridges Programmes.

reported frustration at long delays for the Home Office to come to a decision about granting indefinite Leave to Remain and subsequent appeal delays. The UKBA often appeal against their initial decision being overturned in the courts. Policies were introduced to counter the length of time it took to make decisions. The Case Resolution Directorate was established in 2006 to clear the backlog of 450,000 asylum cases still outstanding after several years, with the plan for them all to be resolved by July 2011. The consequence of Case Resolution was that 90% of asylum-seekers in Glasgow who met the criteria to be assessed in this way were granted Leave to Remain. The 2007 National Asylum Model (NAM), which also took over any outstanding Case Resolution cases, aimed to ensure that cases were dealt with promptly in order for rapid removal or integration to take place. These policies were welcomed in part by such organizations as the Refugee Council and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, but they raised concerns over certain issues, such as Case Resolution decisions giving people Leave to Remain outside 'refugee status' which effectively denied them full refugee rights, and lack of time for cases to be properly prepared under NAM¹². Paradoxically, the quickness of decisions where Leave to Remain is granted can cause problems for asylum-seekers who find themselves with refugee status and may no longer have access to support given to asylum-seekers. One problem is that although they may now be entitled to full integration into the labour market, their level of English may prevent them from accessing employment. Despite the speeding up of decision-making processes under NAM however, there are – albeit far fewer than before, according to Maggie Lennon – still those who slip through the net, in particular where it comes to appeal processes.

Those asylum-seekers whose applications fail can find themselves destitute, with no entitlement to housing, public funds or employment. According to an article in the Inside Housing website in June 2012, a survey conducted by Glasgow Caledonian University [and commissioned by the charities Refugee Survival Trust, the British Red Cross and Scottish Refugee Council] found that out of 364 asylum-seekers presenting to 13 support agencies across Glasgow during a period of

¹² For full details, see: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/briefings/2009/casesolutionsupdate> and www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/refugees_and_asylum_seekers_research_report.pdf

one week in March 2012, eighty-eight were destitute as they had been refused asylum and their appeal rights were exhausted. The average time of destitution was one-and-a-half years. (One survey participant had been destitute for six-and-a-half years.) Twenty-nine countries were represented in the group of destitute asylum-seekers; the most common being Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Zimbabwe. Gary Christie, head of policy at the Scottish Refugee Council, is quoted in the article: *'Destitution is not a policy failure by the Home Office, it is a policy outcome. [...]*¹³

3. Vet provision in Glasgow and legal framework for access

3.1. Formal VET system

In Scotland formal VET takes place in colleges and in the workplace environments. Vocational training is mainly targeted at young people aged 16-18 years. There are Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships programmes where the young person spends most of their time on placement with an employer, and a smaller proportion of their time within a learning environment – in most cases a college, often on a day-release basis, where they work towards nationally recognised qualifications awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Asylum-seekers are legally prevented from participating in such programmes because they are full-time training opportunities for which the Scottish Government provides funding. Whilst there are other vocational training programmes aimed at older workers, these are often driven largely by labour market needs and are subject to short-term funding to meet any gaps in the labour market. There are from time to time government-funded programmes aimed at specific groups facing barriers and disadvantages in the labour market in general, or in specific sectors, for example initiatives that target men into care work, or older workers into semi-skilled manual employment.

The college sector in Scotland has traditionally provided a wide range of vocational educational programmes, although in more recent years colleges have offered academic programmes such as Higher National Certificates and Diplomas that articulate directly with degree programmes at universities. Vocational programmes do continue to be offered by colleges through both part-

¹³ Source: <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/one-in-four-glasgow-asylum-seekers-are-destitute/6522282.article>

time and full-time modes of study, although the vast majority of the provision is full-time. Again, programmes lead to nationally recognized qualifications and attract government funding, so asylum-seekers would not be able to access these opportunities. Once refugee status has been granted, however, there would be the possibility of access, although other barriers may be presented, such as finance, travel costs, child care, and lack of suitable entrance qualifications and insufficient level of skill in English language. Colleges in Glasgow have supported asylum-seekers in other ways, such as provision of ESOL and other non-formal programmes (see below). Some of the ESOL provision in Glasgow has had a vocational element, for example ESOL for the construction sector or social care sector.

In the higher education (university) sector the most likely barrier to accessing full-time study to any recent arrival in the UK would be funding, given that there is a three-year residence requirement in order to qualify for financial support for fees, student loan and means-tested bursaries. Those not ordinarily domiciled in Scotland would be liable for paying substantial overseas fees for studying. Children from asylum-seekers families can enroll at school immediately upon arrival and there are EAL (English as an Additional Language) teachers in school with high numbers of overseas pupils. The Scottish Government set out in 2007 that young people from asylum-seeker families who had lived in Scotland for three years could be granted the same funding status as those ordinarily resident. In Scotland there is a part-time fee waiver scheme, which means that part-time study at higher education is free to those in receipt of state benefits and on low incomes. As asylum-seekers are supported by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS)¹⁴ and, being outside the state benefit system, are not counted as being on a 'low income', they cannot access part-time study at higher education level through the fee waiver scheme.

Before the 1st July 2012, those who did not qualify for the fee waiver scheme, and those in further or higher education may have been eligible for an Individual Learning Account (ILA), which is an annual award that people could register for who earned below the national average income (set currently at £22,000). Learning had to be provided by a recognized institution and

¹⁴ For information on NASS please see website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Asylum_Support_Service

lead towards a qualification¹⁵. Asylum-seekers were never entitled to ILA anyway, but the changes in eligibility criteria since the 1st July 2012 have had a serious impact on refugees already studying in ESOL programmes. This is because only people who are not in education, do not have a degree or above and are not taking part in a National Training Programme (Modern Apprenticeship, Get Ready for Work or Training for Work) can apply for ILA¹⁶. In a nutshell, nobody who is in further or higher education can now access ILA. This therefore includes refugees attending ESOL programmes who now cannot access ILA funding support for vocational training.

Although, technically, asylum-seekers are not entitled access to full-time further education courses, colleges do have the discretion to waive fees and provide bursaries and many asylum-seekers, according to Maggie Lennon, have actually been able to access full-time vocational training, including HNC's (Higher National Certificates) and HND's (Higher National Diplomas). What has changed is that the rise in numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe soaking up fee waivers and bursaries detrimentally affects asylum-seekers' access.

The other main means by which people gain qualifications and develop their careers is through combining studying for qualifications with paid employment. Many professions have a requirement that members undertake a certain amount of continuing professional development annually in order to maintain a good level of knowledge and skills within the field, or to progress in a hierarchical manner within the profession. However, many employed people study for vocational qualifications for their own development and career prospects. Often formal and informal communication within the workplace raises the awareness of such opportunities. Asylum-seekers would not be able to access these communication networks as they would not be in paid employment, although in cases where there have a work shadowing opportunity or work experience this would provide them with the opportunity to become aware of possibilities that would potentially be open to them should they gain refugee status.

¹⁵ Source: <http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/ILA+Homepage.htm>

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/News+and+Events/News+and+Events.htm>

A gulf in legal status and associated rights exists between asylum-seekers on the one hand and refugees on the other, who have gained the right to remain. Asylum-seekers are extremely restricted in relation to formal structures and have to rely on accessing non-formal systems in order to access information, advice and learning. These non-formal systems may be of considerable value in signposting and supporting asylum-seekers, but given the legal restrictions, they stop well short of providing a fast-track route to enhanced career prospects and integration and equal status with the those of working age in the wider population, the vast majority of whom are economically active or engaged in vocational training or learning opportunities.

Skills Development Scotland (formerly Careers Scotland, along with other organizations) is the national provider of vocational guidance. This is an all age service and provides free and impartial guidance to young people in schools as well as to adults in their contact centres across Glasgow. However, in January 2012 funding cuts led to the loss of the two dedicated careers advisers for asylum-seekers and refugees. This service was now ‘mainstreamed’. Asylum-seekers are able to access vocational guidance from Skills Development Scotland and from local economic development companies and voluntary sector organisations around the city, but immediate options are limited, given their distinctive legal status from refugees.

3.2. Non-formal VET system

In Glasgow there are several organizations and projects that make up the profile of the non-formal VET system. This ranges from statutory involvement by the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council, to the college sector and voluntary organizations. Some of the funding for this provision has come from the Scottish Government’s Race, Religion and Refugee Integration Funding Stream, while other sources are European Social Fund, Glasgow City Council, Big Lottery and the Comic Relief charity. There has always been an emphasis on partnership working where providing for Glasgow’s dispersed asylum-seekers is concerned and that was why the government set up the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum in 2002.

The ATLAS Development Partnership, part-funded through the Equal Programme of the European Union, was led by Glasgow City Council and work began in 2002. It was a partnership of statutory and non-statutory organizations, and one of its aims was to support the social and vocational integration of asylum-seekers in Glasgow. The initial focus was “Action for Training and Learning for Asylum-seekers”. Transnational partners were from Denmark, Portugal and Finland. It began with research, which discovered that there was a paucity of information on asylum-seekers; that organisations needed to be better prepared for their arrival under the dispersal policy, and that asylum-seekers were keen to access training and work. As a result a number of projects ran from 2005 to 2007 in four areas: orientation, information, advice and guidance; promotion of community cohesion; ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages); and pre-vocational support¹⁷.

Unfortunately the 2002 Nationality, Asylum and Immigration Act¹⁸ resulted in new asylum-seekers being banned from taking up paid work or full-time vocational education and training, which created difficulties for the Equal programme in the United Kingdom generally. This fact explains the limited focus of the projects developed. The projects most relevant for this study are summarised here, under the headings: Advice and guidance, ESOL, APEL and Non-ESOL learning opportunities. The list is by no means exhaustive¹⁹.

3.2.1. Advice and guidance

- Capacity-Building for Careers Advisors – this was action research carried out by Glasgow North Ltd and the Scottish Enterprise Glasgow Social Justice Transition Team in order to improve the provision of guidance to highly-skilled and professional asylum-seekers and refugees. It was carried out in conjunction with employers and asylum-seekers as well as with careers advisers.

¹⁷ Source: www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/YourCouncil/Atlas

¹⁸ See Section 5 of this report for further information on the 2002 Act.

¹⁹ The main source: www.equal-works.com

- Education and Employment Worker – the Scottish Refugee Council employed a worker to give asylum-seekers information about the labour market and training opportunities so that they would be ready in the event that their claims were successful.
- Glasgow Asylum-Seekers Support Project – an Information and Advice Worker was employed to give specialist information and support in community-based settings throughout Glasgow and to carry out capacity-building in local centres so that they could improve their levels of support. A multi-lingual web site was developed, carrying information and details of relevant agencies.
- Glasgow Guide and Orientation Service – the central call centre of the City Council provided bilingual workers at specific times to take calls from asylum-seekers or their representatives and a printed orientation guide to Glasgow was produced. This was aimed mainly at social integration and signposting of services as opposed to addressing vocational guidance.
- Pilot Orientation and Integration Project – Integrating Toryglen Community developed a comprehensive integration and orientation programme to give local asylum-seekers the information and advice they needed.
- Re-Focus – Anniesland College worked with Glasgow City Council Social Work Department, Greater Glasgow Health Board, Drumchapel Opportunities, Careers Scotland (now one part of Skills Development Scotland) and Dumbarton Road Corridor Community Forum to develop a network, with support materials and workshops, to create easy pathways for people from disadvantaged groups (including asylum-seekers) to move towards mainstream employment.
- The Red Cross has been working with asylum-seekers offering a life skills programme called the Chrysalis Project to help asylum-seekers to develop their cultural awareness and awareness of services and systems that can assist them and their families with integration and learning opportunities.
- The Scottish Refugee Council has offered support to professional asylum-seekers; signposting to specialist services and a wide range of direct services including

counselling and information. The Scottish Refugee Council also had the contract for RIES (Refugee Integration and Employment Service), which provided support and advice about housing as well as education and employment. Although the funding ended in September 2011, the Scottish Refugee Council still perform the function – albeit to a lesser extent.

- RITeS (Refugees Into Teaching in Scotland) was a project supported by the Scottish Government in association with the University of Strathclyde and a number of partner organizations: the Scottish Refugee Council; Glasgow City Council; The Bridges Programmes; the Universities of Glasgow; the West of Scotland and Strathclyde; the West Forum and Anniesland College. The project assisted and supported refugees and asylum-seekers who had teaching qualifications. Funding for the project ceased at the end of March 2011.

3.2.2 ESOL

- ESOL Framework Project – thirteen ESOL units were developed at levels from Beginners up to Upper Intermediate level, with additional student materials, teachers' guides, activity packs and audio materials; thirteen National Assessment Bank sets of material were produced; all materials were tested and revised; and over one thousand candidates obtained the new ESOL qualifications while 157 practitioners received training.
- There are various providers of ESOL throughout Glasgow, including all the colleges and within other community-based settings such as Healthy Living Centres and Glasgow Culture & Sport venues.
- Literacy Project – Rosemount Lifelong Learning developed new ESOL and literacy support materials for non-literate ESOL learners. It provided teaching in small groups or one-to-one, with on-site free childcare. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) provided similar opportunities through Scottish Government adult literacy funding for Glasgow.

- Volunteer Tutor Project – Glasgow ESOL Forum provided a handbook and support materials for volunteer ESOL tutors, who offered regular classes in community-based organisations such as Rosemount Lifelong Learning, Maryhill Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Oasis Women’s Group.

3.2.3 APEL

- Accreditation and Employment Skills – an APEL (Accreditation of Prior Education and Learning) model was developed and piloted by Anniesland College for asylum-seekers with work experience as motor mechanics. The aim was to match their work, education and skills with those expected in Scotland and to build a portfolio that would enable them to find work in this field.
- National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) Qualifications Comparability Orientation – teacher credential evaluation training was delivered to six careers guidance workers and teachers working on refugee teacher accreditation issues so that refugee teachers could more easily access accreditation and re-qualification in order to obtain teaching posts.

3.2.4 Non-ESOL learning opportunities

- Peer Advocacy Pilot Project – training was offered to refugees and asylum-seekers to become advocates on a voluntary basis. This was offered through the Citizen’s Advice Bureau in Glasgow.
- Street Level – through Ypeople (formerly YMCA Scotland), asylum-seekers, refugees and others developed a multimedia arts community website.
- Yin2Work Service (offered by Ypeople) - this project is aimed at supporting black and minority ethnic groups into employment within the care sector, where they are underrepresented. It targets refugees who have a sufficient level of English language skills. Work placements are offered and there is the opportunity to work towards a nationally recognised qualification – Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Level 2 in Social Care.

- The Bridges Programmes – this project provides asylum-seekers and refugees the opportunity to have work shadowing and work experience placements. This gives asylum-seekers a highly valuable opportunity to get first hand experience of working environments whilst waiting for a decision to be made about their application for asylum. The initiative aims to help asylum-seekers to integrate with the wider community and break down any barriers that exist. Bridges also offers refugees a 15-week Employment Support course offering confidence-building, work placements and help with CVs, interviews and applications.
- Glasgow Chamber of Commerce set up a New Glaswegians Project for asylum-seekers and refugees to improve their language skills and update their professional skills
- Anniesland College established an ‘English for Doctors’ programme as part of its proactive approach in providing specialist vocational language training.

Most of the activities consisted of work to prepare professionals to work with asylum-seekers. Little direct vocational education or training, apart from ESOL, was provided for asylum-seekers as a result of the aforementioned 2002 Act.

4. Biographies: Experiences of life as an asylum-seeker in Glasgow

Interviews were conducted with individuals who are or were recently asylum-seekers in Glasgow. Countries represented in the sample were as follows: Algeria, Pakistan, Mauritania, Kuwait and Zimbabwe. The sample included both women and men. The purpose of the interviews was to find out about the background of the individuals prior to leaving their countries of origin and to determine both the challenges and supports in relation to their settling process within the UK, specifically in relation to their experience of engagement in vocational education and training. The interviewees varied in terms of their knowledge and experience of the UK and in relation to their English language skills. These challenges and supports have been framed below as barriers and protective factors. For purposes of confidentiality, their names have been changed.

4.1 Barriers

4.1.1. The initial barriers that all asylum-seekers are likely to face concern their lack of community and cultural preparation, along with the considerable stress of the asylum-seeking process. This process tended to be lengthy, frustrating and disempowering.

The length of time that Amina from Algeria and her family had to wait to get confirmation of refugee status was a big factor that had impacted upon her life since arriving in the UK. It took seven years for the Home Office to grant Amina leave to remain. During this process, Amina felt she had 'no security', was 'powerless' and also 'very frustrated'; this had a very negative influence on her and her family's mental health. Instances such as dawn raids, sudden deportations and the general unfairness of Home Office policy and procedures left a mentality of fear and uncertainty for many asylum-seekers in the same situation as Amina. It was a hugely hindering factor to her integration, feelings of self-worth and her ability to contribute positively to the local community.

Mudikani fled to Glasgow in 2006 by plane as a student from Zimbabwe and after a year claimed asylum due to the events still unfolding there and the effect it was now having on her family. She had her application for asylum rejected, despite having clear evidence about what had happened to her family. She tried to launch an appeal, but this right was denied, and a fresh application had to be made which eventually led to refugee status being granted for the statutory five years.

Due to her poor English when she arrived in the UK, Rabab from Pakistan, who arrived in Glasgow in 2008 lacked confidence and suffered from poor mental health. The trauma she experienced in Pakistan was compounded by the stressfulness of the asylum process, which she feels was the largest barrier for her to be able to develop her confidence to begin to take on voluntary roles and improve her English. Rabab has been waiting for over four years now for this decision and has found it stressful to have been in this situation for so long.

As a Bedoun (sometimes known as Bedoon, Bidūn, Bidoun), Faran is a stateless person in the eyes of his country, Kuwait. This status meant that he did not have access to education or any form of state support, was discriminated against and had no rights. He has now found himself in a similar situation as a 'destitute asylum-seeker' due to his claim for asylum being rejected and the decision on his appeal pending. As a destitute asylum-seeker, he is unable to receive any benefits or attend any college courses even though he had previously been attending a city centre college. Faran is waiting to hear news about his appeal and is currently relying on friends and organizations that support destitute asylum-seekers for support and accommodation. This status is particularly stressful mentally for Faran and his health is suffering.

Karim fled from Palestine in 2006, travelling through Syria, Turkey, Italy and France before reaching UK shores in 2007 when he was dispersed to Glasgow. He is not married, has no children and his family remain in Palestine. Karim's biggest barrier has been the length of time he has been waiting for his leave to remain in the UK. Without these papers he is unable to progress in life; for Karim, they are the key to moving on in education and employment. At one point Karim was offered a position as a coach in a third division football team in Scotland, but because he doesn't have his papers he was unable to take the offer. This was very frustrating for him, as, before arriving in the UK, he had worked as a Football Coach for children between the ages of 12 and 13 years. He had been very successful and his occupation was also his passion in life. Karim feels that his skills are being weakened by the length of time he has had to wait for his papers. He also adds that receiving his leave to remain is the only way the Home Office actually begins to view you as a human being. Karim is generally a very optimistic and active person, but lately he has been feeling discouraged by his situation. This has affected his mental and physical health by making him depressed, and also he has started smoking. He has been waiting for a decision for four years.

4.1.2. Restricted access to achieving recognized vocational qualifications apart from ESOL can be a barrier to career progression. Najmah from Pakistan – who was married and is now separated – moved to Glasgow in 2008 with her three children due to safety issues and instability

in her country. She has been attending ESOL classes and is now at Upper Intermediate level at Clydebank College. Alongside her ESOL classes, Najmah is also taking a course in customer services. However, although this course is run by the college, it is not a recognized SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) qualification because due to her status as an asylum-seeker, she is not officially allowed to take any full-time courses apart from ESOL. However, if colleges had the resources available and enough demand, it would be possible to run a 2-year part-time course in a SQA course [thereby making it accessible to asylum-seekers]. This therefore depends on the individual educational institutes rather than any regulations set by the SQA.²⁰ Najmah's dream job would be to work in a bank or be an accountant, but as she is still awaiting the decision of the Home Office and cannot access part-time, recognized qualifications in this field, her career plans cannot proceed.

In the same way, Rabab had aspirations to train as a beauty therapist, but has had to wait until a decision is made by the Home Office with regards to her status, before being in a position to start upon this career path. Faran, as a destitute asylum-seeker has no access to vocational training programmes of any type. Before his claim was rejected, he was able to complete courses in digital camera techniques, customer services and consumer complaints. Faran enjoyed these courses and is disappointed he cannot continue to attend college due to his status. Karim is interested in attending a formal coaching course in Glasgow to advance his skills in this field, but he does not have access to this due to his asylum-seeker status.

4.1.3. Poor access to formal English language tuition (ESOL) can be a barrier. The six further education colleges in Glasgow are struggling to meet demand and may have to operate waiting lists, meaning a significant delay for the asylum-seeker hopeful of breaking down the language barrier. This was the experience of Saidou from Mauritania, who arrived in Cardiff by boat from Spain in 2007, leaving behind his four children aged between 17 and 24 along with his ex-wife. Although he attended an ESOL course at Central College in 2009, he was not able to attend in

²⁰ Najmah's situation highlights the structural imbalances within the further and higher education establishment where some colleges can waive fees and offer bursaries to asylum-seekers whilst others do not or cannot offer this support to asylum-seekers. See Section 3 of this report.

2011 due to the long waiting lists. He was placed on waiting lists by several city colleges that offered ESOL. In his case, he was then advised that there was community-based provision being offered. However the venue for this was a Christian church and being a practising Muslim, Saidou declined this offer.

4.1.4. Pathways to integration and support can be difficult to find. Interviewees reported finding this difficult initially at least, with one interviewee reporting real barriers. Saidou reported experiencing racism, discrimination and fear that he was a terrorist. He expressed considerable dissatisfaction with how he was treated by UK security officials. He reported a sense of people thinking that asylum-seekers are either terrorists or are uneducated and abusing the system, as opposed to the reality that they are seeking to have their human rights met and social justice. He has become disillusioned with the UK, and as an asylum-seeker in a major city with high numbers of asylum-seekers, had not even been able to access English language tuition in a suitable venue, far less any voluntary employment or other education or training. His goal was now to settle in another country.

4.1.5. Some asylum-seekers arrive with few or no educational qualifications from their country of origin. This was the case for Najmah, who had received basic education in Pakistan up to the age of fourteen, but was unable to take on any further education or work as her father died. She was needed to stay at home and help her mother. This was also the case for Rabab, who had been brought up in a very traditional religious family in which it was considered inappropriate for women to pursue educational qualifications beyond school or to seek paid employment. These difficulties, coupled with the language barrier, made it particularly difficult for Rabab to participate in ESOL classes in Glasgow. Faran did not receive any kind of formal schooling or training in Kuwait due to his Bedoun background. Before 1984, the Bedoun lived peacefully in Kuwait, but then the authorities in Kuwait began to restrict Bedoun children's access to education and their families' rights to state support. Education was provided by volunteers for some Bedoun children in the local Mosques; Faran was able to access this for a while.

Even when asylum-seekers enter the UK with higher-level qualifications they often face structural barriers in transferring their skills. In many ways Rabab, Najmah and Faran are not typical; as most asylum-seekers have gained qualifications and worked in their countries of origin, as the Scottish Refugee Council's survey in 2011 found. Despite a lack of formal education, however, Faran picked up many skills, practical abilities and experiences, such as carpentry, floor laying, hairdressing and cooking. Before coming to the UK he worked as a fisherman in a boat and then started to export goods between Bahrain and Iran. He also worked for seven years in Saudi Arabia as a barber.

4.1.6. A highly significant barrier is the lack of recognition of qualifications that asylum-seekers arrive with. This includes degree level qualifications that are simply not recognized as such in the UK. The implication of this is that any aspiration that the individual may have to enter the profession for which they were qualified is not a realistic prospect in either the short or medium term. Law and teaching were amongst the professions represented in the interviewees. Amina had studied law and administration to degree standard and worked in the family law firm in Algeria before having to flee the country with her husband and son. In Mauritania, Saidou had been educated to Baccalaureate (equivalent of France's national secondary-school diploma) level and then had gone on to specialize in teaching. After attending an institution for teacher training (1986-88) he worked as a history teacher until 1992. Before leaving Palestine, Karim completed a degree in Commerce and also took a Diploma in Football Coaching. Mudikani had finished her A Levels in Zimbabwe and was two months into a degree in music and musicology before having to flee to Harare.

4.1.7. Financial barriers were found to be significant as well as lack of recognition of qualifications. Funding arrangements for full-time study are different for anyone who has been in the UK for less than three years, after which time – unless they are asylum-seekers – they have parity with the wider population, as they are considered to be ordinarily resident, and no longer liable for the overseas fees. The Scottish government rule about asylum-seekers being treated as home students for University entrance applies only to children who have been at school in the

UK for a minimum of three years and who have the necessary higher passes. No asylum-seeker can be treated as a home student unless they meet these criteria. A further financial barrier is that asylum-seekers cannot access part-time higher education through the fee waiver scheme for those on low income and social security benefits²¹.

4.1.8. For some asylum-seekers a barrier is their emotional response to the negative experiences that they have been through in their country of origin. If there is unresolved trauma, this can be damaging, especially when it is combined with so many other transitions in life that require adjustment, such as a new cultural environment and climate. When Rabab arrived in Glasgow from Pakistan she found it very difficult to adjust to the way of life. Traumatic experiences in her home country, isolation, the cold weather, and her inability to speak English were factors that began to affect Rabab's mental health, resulting in depression, paranoia, panic attacks and high blood pressure. For almost one year Rabab was reluctant to leave her home. It wasn't until she met some women at a local community centre who advised her to attend community ESOL classes that she began to find pathways to friendship, support and services that would assist her integration into life in Glasgow.

4.1.9. A barrier for some asylum-seekers with children is the extent to which their family can access opportunities on the same basis as their peers in the wider population. Najmah mentioned in her interview that her children found it difficult to accept why they seemed to be treated differently, for example when their school mates were going on an educational trip overseas and they were not allowed to join in.

4.1.10. When asylum-seekers are eventually granted permission to remain in the UK, almost certainly they will not have been in paid employment for many years. It is therefore difficult for them to secure employment, and reliance on state benefits – Job Seekers Allowance may be the only option. According to Gareth Mulvey, this cannot be dismissed as being due to the economic downturn, as many of the respondents in their survey (2011) struggled to access work prior to

²¹ See section 3.1 of this report.

that downturn. For those who are successful in securing paid employment, this may be part-time, low paid and very different from the level and type of employment that they had expected. This was the case for Mudikani, who was working as a part-time care assistant via an agency, whilst studying for a Social Sciences degree.

4.2 Protective factors

4.2.1. Protective factors amongst the interviewees varied. Where there was the opportunity to utilize experience from their home country, this made a significant contribution to their success. For example, Amina was able to make good use of her education and training in a law firm in Algeria to become actively involved in assisting asylum-seekers and refugees with accessing services, support and advice. Amina was one of the first groups of asylum-seekers in Glasgow in 2001 and initially it was very difficult to access appropriate information, advice, support and language classes. However, services emerged and began to respond proactively to the needs of the newly arrived asylum-seekers and Amina was able to access ESOL classes at a local college and undertake voluntary work with the Scottish Refugee Council and Maryhill Integration Network.

4.2.2. The interviewees were generally very positive about their experience of volunteering in Glasgow. This helped with developing English language skills, increasing social opportunities for the family and establishing support networks. A common theme seemed to be a desire to help others in similar situations to themselves. It seems that many asylum-seekers wish to draw on difficult experiences in life and put these to effective use in a helping role. Not only was there a desire to help others by working with them directly in a voluntary capacity, but also active commitment to campaigning for human rights. There seems to be a positive cycle activated once the asylum-seeker becomes actively involved in voluntary work, in that this improves their English language skills; helps them to become more integrated, confident and settled in their new community with realigned career ambitions appropriate to their new context.

4.2.3. Engagement with locally based voluntary sector organizations was a very significant protective factor for the interviewees. These included Ypeople (formerly the YMCA), Scottish Refugee Council and the local integration networks. Rabab made good use of the Maryhill Integration Network and this built up her confidence and was a contributing factor to her improved level of mental health and well-being. Amina accessed the Scottish Refugee Council and the Y. A key project was the Dialogue Group facilitated by the local Integration Network, which allowed her to have a say in the delivery of services to asylum-seekers and refugees. Saidou reported finding support in local community groups that promote integration whilst 'living in a gap' waiting for paper to grant him refugee status.

4.2.4. The character strengths of the interviewees served as protective factors. What came through in the interview with Amina, for example was that she was an extremely able, well-educated and strong-willed individual with a keen sense of social justice and a vision for the future of her family. Likewise, Mudikani had a strong desire to better herself, coupled with a determination to help others in vulnerable situations. She also had a vision for the future, and whilst ultimately her dream would be to be able to settle happily in her homeland again, she was building plans for a more likely stay in the UK, having secured refugee status. Najmah developed greater confidence once engaged in ESOL classes and linked in with other asylum-seekers at the Maryhill Integration Network.

4.2.5. For asylum-seekers with children, simply having dependents in itself may have been a protective factor, bringing a focus and a purpose in life, but as well as that experience of schools and nurseries in Glasgow were positive and an important source of support. Local children were found to be supportive of their peers from different backgrounds. Help was available for selecting a suitable school and becoming enrolled.

4.2.6. One of the interviewees reported that she had found a new life in the UK that provided her with rights, protection, stability and opportunities - all the key things that she lacked in her former life in her home country. Whilst there was general frustration at the limitations regarding

vocational opportunities, interviewees were gradually able to build networks of support and have realistic plans for their futures.

4.3. Concluding remarks

The interviews conducted with asylum-seekers and refugees in Glasgow for the present report showed that a lack of cultural and social capital were significant barriers to progression. Institutional barriers such as governmental bureaucracy were present as well as an element of racism and discrimination. Interview data showed that, for asylum-seekers and refugees, securing desired learning opportunities; training or even voluntary employment can be highly problematic. In a competitive labour market and severe financial constraints amongst providers there were also challenges in securing suitable opportunities, including ESOL tuition and voluntary work experience. Often the options are limited and vocational goals have to be delayed considerably or abandoned while less desirable opportunities are settled for. There is a clear link between asylum-seekers being prevented from working and their over-representation in low paid employment once they have been granted leave to remain and refugee status. Asylum-seekers lose ground as compared with their peers in the wider population who may be able to sustain low paid employment and aspire to progress from there. For many of the asylum-seekers interviewed, their cases took several years to be considered and this can often happen at a stage in life when they would be expecting to be building their careers. Many regard this frustrating period as being held ‘in limbo’.

5. An ethos of inclusion against a policy of exclusion

The question could be posed as to whether the principles of integration in Glasgow really are different from the reality of barriers to integration faced by asylum-seekers in the present political climate? Gareth Mulvey implies that they may not be:

“The integration of refugees into their new countries has long been an issue of concern and interest for governments, civil society and academics alike. Governments at all levels, be it

the European Union, the British Government, the Scottish Government or local authorities have key roles to play in facilitating integration. However, many in the voluntary sector and numerous academics have expressed concerns that policy and practice is not supporting integration, and indeed may be operating against it."²²

Gareth Mulvey, has however, stated that the Scottish Government embraces the ethos of inclusion and integration from day one. According to the Scottish Government website:

"Scotland has a long history of welcoming refugees and asylum-seekers. A total of £5.6 million from 2008 - 2011 was issued through the Scottish Government Race, Religion and Refugee Integration Fund. This funding stream was designed to assist the Scottish Government to improve the lives of minority ethnic and faith communities in Scotland, including asylum-seekers and refugees, by tackling the inequalities that currently exist, increasing race and faith equality and promoting good relations between different racial and faith groups as well as by reducing the incidence of racism, discrimination, and religious intolerance in all their forms. Since 2001, over £12.5 million has been invested to aid the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers in Scotland. This funding has not been purely for the benefit of refugees but also for the benefit of local people in the communities they live in. Helping refugees to integrate helps vulnerable people create new lives and contribute to their new communities."²³

In the Scottish Refugee Council website's latest news report, Gary Christie, Head of Policy and Communications at the Scottish Refugee Council is quoted:

"Glasgow City Council for over 10 years, with the support of all political parties, has provided a welcome and humane response to the arrival of people seeking asylum. The Council, statutory agencies, voluntary, community and faith organisations have all

²² Source: Mulvey, 2011

²³ Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/Refugees-asylum/>

played a role in helping refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and contribute to Glasgow's economic, cultural and social life.”(July 2012)²⁴

The Scottish Government is responsible for devolved issues relating to asylum-seekers, which include integration initiatives, such as English language classes and translation assistance, and services such as health care, education and legal advice. However, as Scotland is not presently an independent country, it comes under the jurisdiction of the government at Westminster and its policies of exclusion that go against the ethos of integration stated by the Scottish Government. Two such policies are highlighted below.

The aforementioned article refers to the motion passed overwhelmingly at Glasgow City Council on the 28th June 2012 condemning the UKBA's policy of forcing people seeking asylum into destitution²⁵. They called on the UK Government to provide asylum-seekers with financial support to avoid abject poverty. Councillor Susan Aitken moved that the:

“Council condemns the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) policy of destitution and the eviction of refused asylum seekers that is increasing the strain on the charities and communities supporting their most basic needs. Council believes that the number of destitute asylum seekers now living on the streets of Glasgow represents a humanitarian crisis that requires an urgent response. [...]”²⁶

Susan Aitken endorsed the Scottish Refugee Policy Forum conference report recommending that all asylum-seekers should be provided with UKBA cash support and demanded that the UK Government change existing rules severely restricting local authorities in support they can provide to failed asylum-seekers.

The main thrust of the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act of 2002 was to extend powers of detention, hence the ‘dawn raids’ that took place in Glasgow and elsewhere. It aimed to allow the UK to take a much tougher stand on ‘unjustified claims’. Asylum-seekers would be expected to

²⁴ Source:

http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/news_and_events/latest_news/1751_glasgow_city_council_stands_up_for_destitute_asylum_seekers#site_layout

²⁵ See page 10 regarding destitute asylum-seekers.

²⁶ Source: Ibid

make their claim for asylum as soon as they arrived, or they would not be supported. Detention could happen at any point, not just close to the point of removal. It made clear the definition of an asylum-seeker in the UK as *‘someone who is at least 18 years old, is in the UK and who has made a claim under the Refugee Convention or under article 3 ECHR, at a place designated by the Secretary of State, which has been recorded by the Secretary of State but which has not yet been determined [...]’*²⁷.

Certain Articles of the Act have, by their implementation, created an environment of exclusion for asylum-seekers, in particular where it comes to access to vocational and educational training (VET), and the labour market. The consequence of the fundamental change brought about by the Act regarding the right to work in the UK has meant that since the 23rd July 2001 applicants for asylum are no longer able to work until they are given a positive decision – irrespective of how long the process takes. (This measure does not affect asylum applicants who were allowed to work before 23 July 2002, or those who applied for their work restriction to be lifted before 23 July 2002.) The government at Westminster justified this new policy on the basis that most asylum decisions would be made in less than six months and based on its view that employment acts as a ‘pull-factor’.

Evidence from the biographies appears to negate the former justification. However, in recent times the decision-making process has shortened, with cases being brought to a decision earlier – taking around 6-9 months as opposed to several years in some cases. However, very recently, for some cases the time taken for a decision to be made is lengthening again to 18 months, for example. There is no legislation in place to ensure a decision is made within a set period of time. The Refugee Council, in response to the latter justification that access to employment encourages more asylum-seekers to come to the UK states:

"There is no evidence that giving asylum-seekers who are awaiting the decision for permission to work encourages more asylum applications. In fact, research commissioned by the Home Office (Home Office Research Study 243: Understanding the decision-making of

²⁷ Article 73, Section 18 of the Act

*asylum-seekers, July 2002) demonstrates that this is not a reason why people apply for asylum in the UK.*²⁸

The Refugee Council states that the policy to end the work concession for asylum applicants was pushed through “*in haste and without consultation.*” They present several arguments opposing the denial of access to employment on several grounds: The public feel that asylum-seekers should pay their way; there will be significant extra costs in supporting asylum-seekers; UK employers will be denied access to a pool of skills and resources that are needed to deal with current skills shortages. Asylum-seekers who have to wait more than 6 months for a decision, and particularly those with specialist occupations, such as health professionals, who need to keep their skills up to date, will be adversely affected.²⁹

Article 11(2) of the European Reception Directive (2003/9/EC) made provision for asylum-seekers to be granted permission to work if they applied for this permission after waiting a year for an initial decision on their asylum claim. In July 2010, the UK Supreme Court gave a judgment that Article 11 (2) should apply equally to a situation where an asylum-seeker has been waiting for a year for a decision on their first asylum claim and to a situation where an asylum-seeker has been waiting for a year for an initial decision on their ‘fresh’ claim for asylum. This means that if an asylum-seeker is refused asylum and they make a fresh claim, they are to have the status of ‘asylum-seeker’ again and be covered under the protection of the European Reception Directive that provides provision for an adequate standard of living and access to healthcare, as well as the rights stated above to apply for permission to work.

Despite the ethos of integration of the European Directive and UK Supreme Court in this matter, the response of the UK government and UKBA has been to undermine integration of asylum-seekers into the labour market by the implementation of barriers to access through policy. This issue has been highlighted by the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association (ILPA) in their

²⁸ Source:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/Resources/Refugee%20Council/downloads/briefings/nia_act_02/ed_1_dec02.pdf

²⁹ Source: Ibid.

information sheets: Permission to Work Judgment 2, dated 4th August 2010 and Permission to Work Judgment 3, dated 24 August 2010. Part of the problem was that the government could refer both to Article 11(2) of the European Directive which permits conditions on access to the job market to be imposed, and to Article 11(4) which permits priority access to the job market to be granted to others before asylum-seekers. The consequence has been that, effective from the 9 September 2010, asylum-seekers with permission to work cannot be self-employed; cannot set up in business, and can only take a job of a type listed on the UKBA's shortage occupation list that is very restrictive. This is due to the fact that the positions are skilled, and very often highly skilled, although not all skilled or highly skilled work is included. Engineers, teachers, medical practitioners, social workers and care assistants are included in the list, but most jobs within these areas are not included. For instance, in the case of teacher positions, asylum-seekers can only access teaching jobs in schools for children with special educational needs or teaching maths, physics, chemistry or biology in secondary schools. According to ILPA:

*"[...]the restrictions may well mean that an asylum-seeker, who is entitled to permission to work, gets no benefit from this at all because most asylum-seekers will likely not have the skills or experience to take none of the listed jobs."*³⁰

According to Melanie Gower in her article: Asylum seekers and the right to work – Commons Library Standard Note, dated 7 November 2011, the government has decided not to opt in to the amended reception conditions directive by the European Commission due to its proposal to shorten the length of wait necessary before applying for permission to work from 12 months to six months.³¹

6. Good Practice

In view of the time and space constraints of this city report, only one organization will be presented as an example of 'Good Practice'³². The Bridges Programmes has been chosen as one

³⁰ Source: www.ilpa.org.uk/infoservice.html

³¹ Source: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN01908>

³² The following information is sourced from the Bridges Programmes' website, unless otherwise stated.

of the successful support agencies for this case study, as the focus of the report is on barriers to the integration of asylum-seekers into VET and the labour market.

6.1. An overview of the organization

The Bridges Programmes is an agency dedicated to providing employability and empowerment support to refugees, asylum-seekers, third country nationals (referred to as clients) and anyone living in Glasgow whose first language is not English as well as campaigning for the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and third country nationals. They operate from Govan in the South West of Glasgow, but do not work alone. They have they established 4 main groups of partners who are funders, host employers, delivery partners, European and UK partners.

6.1.1. Funders

In the last financial year, funding was obtained by Big Lottery, European Social Fund (ESF Priority 1), European Refugee Fund (administered by UKBA), Comic Relief, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government (Race Religion and Refugee Fund), which has recently awarded Bridges Programmes another 12 months funding.

6.1.2. Host employers

Bridges has worked with over 150 employers from the public, not for profit and private sectors in the last 5 years and they are the most important stakeholders because they make possible Bridges' delivery of integration into the workplace. Some recent host employers are presented in their different sectors below: -

Public: Glasgow City Council; South Lanarkshire Council; Scottish Court Service; Greater Glasgow NHS; Govanhill Health Centre; Maryhill Health Centre; National Museum of Scotland; Burrell Museum; Dalry Nursery and over 17 schools across Glasgow.

Academic: Glasgow University; Strathclyde University; Glasgow Caledonian University; West of Scotland University; Anniesland College; The Open University of Scotland.

Private: Laing O'Rourke Scotland; Cruden's Construction; Sir Robert McAlpine; BUPA, Tesco's, Hamilton Burns Solicitors; BBC Scotland; Scott House Management; Blythswood Square Hotel; Hilton International; Enterprise; Laura Ashley; Ashgill Court Care Home.

Not for Profit: Second Opportunities; Spruce Carpets; Glasgow Dyslexia Support Services; Artists in Exile; Scottish Business in the Community; Christian Aid; Sense Scotland; Waverley Trust; Ethnic Minority Law Centre.

6.1.3. Delivery partners

Bridges works in collaboration with partner organizations to deliver their support services, some of which are detailed below: -

Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs (through the Old Firm Alliance and funded by Comic Relief): Bridges has delivered Life Skills support and placements and the clubs have delivered a range of sporting activities such as coaching skills and healthy living lessons to a mixed age group of clients aged 18 to 50.

Annie'sland College: As part of the college's 16 plus ESOL curriculum, Bridges has delivered six 13-week Life Skills classes to young clients over the last 3 years.

City of Glasgow College: Since 2008 the former Metropolitan College that is now part of the City of Glasgow College has been delivering a series of vocational ESOL support in Social Care, Customer Service, Education, Construction and Finance devised by Bridges and in partnership with some of the host employers.

British Red Cross: Refugee journalists with employment skills are training to be community journalists through the Red Cross' New Voices community newspaper with the support of Bridges.

Scottish Court Service: As well as providing placement opportunities as a host employer, the Scottish Court Service partner with Bridges to deliver short employability support to clients on a yearly basis.

The Open University in Scotland: In promoting access to Higher Education, Bridges has worked in collaboration with the university since 2006 and in 2008 Openings for the Future was launched at Bridges, which included hosting a careers and guidance advisor from the university to help clients access a range of courses from Openings courses to full degrees.

GRAMNET (Glasgow Refugee and Asylum network): Bridges is an active member of the network that brings together academics, researchers, practitioners and clients for mutual benefit.

6.1.4. European and UK Partners

Bridges engages in shared learning and transfer of good practice with partners in other parts of the UK and across Europe, and occasionally hosts visits from similar programmes from countries outside Europe, such as Australia and New Zealand. In the UK Bridges works in association with many organizations and has presented its practice at many conferences. It works very closely with Employment Forum based in London, and they are at present working together on a project to support Finance professionals. In addition to its transnational work funded by the European Commission, Bridges is regularly asked to share its practice with European and world partners and has presented its work at conferences and seminars in Greece, Sweden, Berlin, Poland and England. It has hosted projects from Norway, Finland, Denmark, France, Australia and New Zealand. The Bridges Best Practice guide has been disseminated widely across Europe. Bridges is currently aiming to develop a new European partnership under the call for Community Actions in the European Integration Fund in order to promote faster integration to the workplace through employer engagement and vocational training for the target group. (Partners will be from Scotland, England, Flanders, Reunion Islands, Poland and Germany.) Other European partnerships include: -

E-EPSOL (Education and Employment Pathways for Speakers of Other Languages): This is a two-year project that ends in 2013 knowledge exchange partnership whereby European partners will be piloting and adapting key methodologies and training materials developed by Bridges and Anniesland College³³.

IMPART (Improving Participation of Migrants in the Workplace): This partnership focuses on accreditation of qualifications and experience for migrant workers and refugees and fostering anti-discrimination practices in the workplace. The Commission for Integration and Migration of the Berlin senate heads the partnership and Maggie Lennon spent 5 weeks on secondment to the Commission in order to support the partnership and draft their plans to mainstream their work.

6.2. Bridge's work placement programmes

Various opportunities are available to practise skills and past experience in the Scottish labour market. Depending on background and immigration status, job tasting sessions, work shadowing, work experience and volunteering opportunities are offered. Although the placements are unpaid, travel is paid for and Bridges can arrange and pay for childcare if required. The placements are intended to provide valuable experience of working with an employer in Scotland which could enhance job prospects as the experience could be included in CVs (Curriculum Vitae) and application forms; furthermore references could be obtained from the host employer involved. Although there is no obligation for the employer to offer the client a job at the end of the placement, many people do secure employment after being on one of the programmes and a few have actually been employed by host employers at the end of the work placement. With certain work placements, where there may be contact with the public or where there may be health and safety issues, English has to be at Intermediate level 1 in ESOL. A typical placement is for 12 days (either one day a week for 12 weeks, or two days a week for 6 weeks).

Bridges can also help asylum-seekers who are not allowed to work, by placing them on work shadowing placements or offering a chance to volunteer with voluntary organizations. With

³³ Source: www.e-epsol.eu

regard to work shadowing, this involves the client working alongside someone who is doing a similar job to what the client used to have. It gives them a chance to improve their vocational English and to see how the job is done in Glasgow, as well as refreshing and/or developing skills.

6.3. Employability Support

For those who have permission to work in the UK, Bridges offers various ways to help them become job ready. Bridges runs courses for 4 weeks covering communication skills; CV workshops; application support; mock interviews with employers; visits to employers; information interviews with employers; personal action planning and skills recognition. These courses are called 'Equipped for the Future'. There are also individual workshops on many of these subjects and individual support can be provided to a client when he or she is offered an interview. Support does not end there because once a job is offered to a client, Bridges will arrange in work financial calculations in order to smooth the transition from being on benefits to paid employment. Bridges can go through staff contracts and calculate what the salary will be. Furthermore, additional support with English language linked to the workplace can be given.

6.4. Women's Empowerment

Specialist services are offered by Bridges to women with any kind of immigration status who are isolated in the city and face barriers to integration into VET and the labour market due to lack of child care; poor English; no previous work experience or training. Short 6 day courses over 3 weeks are provided to bring women together from across the city and to help them form friendships and networks. Moreover, the women will be supported to identify their skills and understand how past experiences can be valuable in building a new life. Bridges will help with the development of a Personal Action Plan for short, medium and long-term goals. Childcare is provided and paid for by Bridges, and travel expenses are also paid.

The impact of this specialist support has been that clients have gone college to study English; gone into volunteering or work placements; attended night classes; found work; are studying for HNCs and HNDs at college, and one or two clients have applied to go to university.

6.5. Mentoring Service

For vulnerable women and young people under the age of 25 that are already clients of Bridges (and who may be isolated or lacking in confidence perhaps due to financial hardships, poor English or no social network), a mentoring service is provided by the programme. The mentors (who have been trained how to work with people from different countries and understand the asylum system and difficulties faced by clients) use their own life and experiences to help clients integrate into life in the UK and identify their goals.

Mentors telephone their clients once a week and meet them clients every two to three weeks for about 2 hours to talk about any concerns or worries or how they (the clients) are getting along. Mentors can help clients get to know the city if they have just arrived or if they do not feel confident enough to go out by themselves. Mentors help clients achieve small steps towards a bigger goal; understand what opportunities there are; help identify solutions to problems and have fun.

6.6. Conclusions drawn

The Bridges Programmes is a dynamic and forward thinking establishment that realizes the importance of networking and strengthening the different forms of cooperation between refugee organizations, employers and the VET sector, not only in the UK but abroad, in order to integrate refugees and asylum-seekers into educational and labour markets. They support the target group by not only offering work placements and work shadowing opportunities but by addressing specific internal and external challenges related to being an asylum-seeker or refugee in order to help empower the target group to fulfill their potential in education, training and employment.

“Bridges has been working with the asylum and refugee community in Glasgow since 2002 and is recognized as an innovative and influential organization, dedicated to partnership working and the full integration of asylum-seekers and refugees in the city.”³⁴

7. Recommendations

In view of the data gathered and research in the field of access into VET and employment of refugees, the following recommendations could be made, which not only take into account the specific situation in Glasgow but also at a national level.

1. Employment – Asylum-seekers are not allowed to do paid work due to the changes in the 2002 Act regarding the right to work in the UK. Asylum-seekers want to work and denying access to employment is a barrier to career progression as well as jeopardizing future labour market integration. Asylum-seekers should be allowed access to the labour market in order to give them: the possibility of contributing their skills and resources to society as well as through taxation; the possibility to be financially independent; the opportunity to develop their full potential and engage in work life.

Furthermore, asylum-seekers should not be subject to exclusive policies [that arguably go against the European Reception Directive (2003/9/EC)] implemented by the government and UKBA such as: the delay in making decisions on applications for permission to work after a asylum-seekers have been waiting a year for an initial decision to be made on their first asylum or fresh asylum claim and restricting the types of work accessible, that by their nature, exclude many asylum-seekers from being able to take on these jobs.

2. ESOL Provision – There needs to be more ESOL provision available to meet the high demand for it. Learning the language of the host country is vital for integration at all levels from social

³⁴ Source: <http://www.equalworks.co.uk/resources/contentfiles/3540.pdf>

and cultural to academic, professional and political. Limited access to ESOL is a barrier to integration into further vocational and educational qualifications and the labour market. Moreover, the provision should be made to include people who may have special needs and mental health issues due to their situations. For example, more ESOL classes in the morning would suit people with young children at school, so they can attend when children are there and do not have to worry about extra childcare. Another recommendation would be the provision of ESOL classes with crèche facilities available for people with babies or pre-school children.

3. Vocational training and education – Asylum-seekers are only allowed to attend courses that are under 16 hours per week, which means that many people are denied the opportunity to enroll in full-time courses that could enhance their career prospects. The 2002 Act was endorsed by the government with the justification that most asylum applications would be dealt with within six months from the initial application. It was not until 2007 that the New Asylum Model was introduced, which aimed to give an initial decision very quickly. Subsequently the days of hundreds of cases waiting for over five years to be resolved are over. Many decisions are made within 6 months, but as stated beforehand, timescales are lengthening again in some cases and, as can be seen from the biographies, people are still waiting. Therefore, there should be a ruling that even if the initial decision has not been made within the time period of 6 months, full access should be granted to asylum-seekers who have the ability to undertake vocational training and education.

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