

# REFUGEE INTEGRATION STRATEGY AND FORUM

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15 June 2021



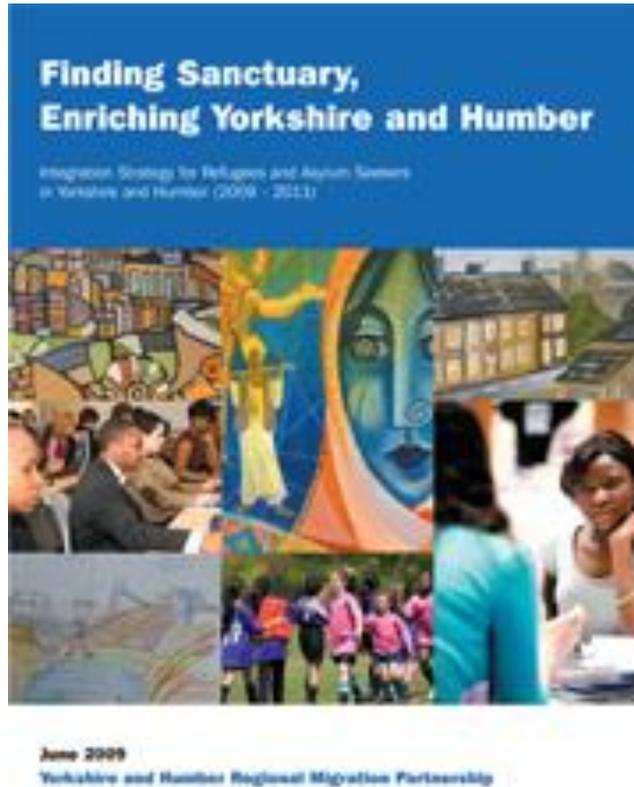
This project is co-funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Making management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union.

# Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber

- AMIF funded project that looks to facilitate strategic work across the region, including strengthening existing, and building new, networks and partnerships (volunteering, employer engagement, ESOL, research, VCS)
- Focus on refugee participation and empowerment
- Research partners will conduct pieces of research in areas such as housing, highly-skilled refugees, ESOL, social interaction and measuring integration
- We will also be organising Yorkshire Integration Festivals in 2021 and 2022
- Part of the project will deliver a new regional Refugee Integration Strategy and a regional Integration Forum to oversee the implementation of the strategy and refugee integration more widely



# Refugee Integration Strategy



## New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy



# Refugee Integration Strategy – why now?

- New Plan for Immigration – support for refugee integration as a strategic priority, with a focus on access to work



# Refugee Integration Strategy – why now?

- Refugee resettlement – over 6,000 refugees resettled in Yorkshire and Humber since 2004, with more commitment to refugee resettlement
- Nearly 6,000 asylum seekers dispersed in the region
- Increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on health and wellbeing, employment, asylum support, refugee support and many other integration areas
- New strategic significance of ‘integration’ in policy, with emphases on language, employment and social interaction
- Social and technological change and new strategic priorities in areas such as digital inclusion, social isolation



# Refugee Integration Strategy – do we need it?

- An integration strategy can
  - strengthen and develop partnership work, including more coordination of actions and interventions, joint commissioning, etc.
  - signal to strategic partners across the region that refugee integration should be a priority in policy and service delivery
  - enable more innovation and dissemination of good practice across the region and nationally
  - increase awareness of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and of the contributions that they make to communities
  - provide more evidence of integration and coordination, potentially increasing funding for organisations across the region



# Refugee Integration Strategy – our approach

- An inclusive strategy that includes all those with experience of forced migration
- An integration strategy that is based on the *lived experience* of refugees *and* those seeking asylum – thinking and working beyond silos; focus on the experience of forced migration and the rebuilding of lives in a new country
- An integration strategy that acknowledges diversity of identities within refugee communities, and recognises the multiple barriers that refugees and asylum seekers experience
- An integration strategy that recognises the assets of our communities as much as the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, with a focus on outcomes
- An integration strategy that aims to promote cultural understanding, reduce social isolation, and enable refugees to fulfil their potential and aspirations



# Refugee Integration Strategy – our approach

- A Refugee Integration Strategy agreed by key partners across the region, but which can also be use as a ‘charter’ for organisations to sign up to and pledge to make refugee integration a priority for them
- Annual Action Plans to reflect changing strategic priorities
- A regional Refugee Integration Forum to oversee and promote refugee integration across the region
- A *regional* refugee integration strategy that is not intended to replace or undermine local initiatives – integration happens primarily locally, and it is hoped that the regional strategy can act as a catalyst for local and/or sector-specific strategic work

# Regional Strategy/Forum and local partners?

- Integration is already happening locally – local services, organisations and communities, as well as refugees and asylum seekers are the key stakeholders
- A regional strategy and forum needs to support local and sub-regional processes by, for instance, providing a stronger voice and leadership, disseminating good practice and guidance, fostering more partnership and shared responsibility
- In particular, the Refugee Integration Forum needs to be a body that provides tangible benefits for the region and local areas – e.g commissioning reports, setting standards, influencing policy
- Alignment of strategic priorities and actions can enhance funding for local organisations

# Refugee Integration Strategy – consultation



Illustration by Nick Ellwood

# Integration Strategy and Forum – consultation

- What does integration mean?
- Strategy vision, values and priorities
- Outcomes and measuring ‘integration’
- Structure, contents and supporting documents
- Refugee Integration Forum terms of reference and membership
- Refugee integration assets in the region and evidence of integration
- Identify development needs in area such as coordination, information, communication, planning, training, governance and other strategic areas

# Integration Strategy and Forum – consultation

- Ongoing engagement – no time limits
- Individual meetings with key stakeholders
- *Strategy workshops* – geographic and thematic (e.g. West Yorkshire, Humber, economic integration, health and wellbeing, community safety, housing)
- Online questionnaire
- Consultation to include refugees, asylum seekers, RCOs, etc.
- Consultation to build upon, rather than duplicate, our extensive evidence base
- Continuing engagement with stakeholders around strategic developments – regular strategy/forum bulletin, website and social media

# Strategic planning and management

- Ongoing engagement and consultation
- Main strategy document and Forum proposal to be submitted to key partners by end of September 2021
- Launch of Strategy and Forum at the Yorkshire Integration Festival (October/November 2021)
- Dedicated resource at MY for developing and implementing the strategy and forum until December 2022

# Integration – what refugees have been telling us

- The importance of meaningful social interaction for a sense of belonging
- Economic integration is very diverse and depends on individual circumstances
- Labels that describe mental wellbeing are culturally specific and are also related to personal background
- Some refugees feel that the category ‘refugee’ can be disempowering
- The role of past experiences and connections, as well as future possibilities
- Many refugees experience space, time, and places differently
- Many people lack, and want to have, a sense of stability in their lives
- Lack of understanding of rules and regulations in the UK

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**Refugee Integration**  
Yorkshire and Humber



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## Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber

[www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/integration](http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/integration)

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