

Scottish Centre for Research on  
**SOCIAL JUSTICE**



**Building Bridges:  
Local responses to the resettlement of  
asylum seekers in Glasgow**

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**The SCRSJ's mission is to promote better understanding of, and more informed debate about, the nature of social justice in Scotland, particularly in relation to public policy.**

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# Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Glasgow .....	1
The Role of the Networks .....	2
1. Introduction .....	5
Background.....	5
Aims.....	6
Methods .....	6
2. The Context .....	10
Introduction.....	10
Integration, Resettlement and Social Justice .....	10
National Closure versus Global Humanitarianism?.....	12
Problems for Service Providers.....	14
Tensions between Different Tiers of Government .....	15
Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain .....	15
Definitions .....	18
The Resettlement Process .....	19
3. Service Provision for Asylum Seekers and the Role of the Integration Networks .....	22
The Origins and Development of the Integration Networks .....	24
The Work of the Networks.....	27
Challenging Myths and Lobbying Decision Makers .....	38
4. Relationships.....	42
The Statutory Sector .....	42
The Voluntary Sector.....	44
The Host Communities.....	45
Asylum Seekers and Refugees.....	46
Communication Between Networks.....	48
The Community Responses Co-ordinating Group (CRCG).....	48
Current Progress and Future Developments.....	49
5. Perceptions of Policy .....	52
Perceptions of the UK Immigration and Asylum Policy Framework .....	53
Perceptions of Integration and Service Provision .....	57
Issues Arising at the Point of Decision .....	59
6. Network Support Needs .....	62
Common Support Needs .....	62
Specific Network Support Needs .....	64
Meeting Support Needs.....	65
Training Needs.....	68
7. Conclusion.....	69
Role and Activities of Integration Networks .....	69
Relative Roles of Statutory and Voluntary Sectors .....	70
Barriers to the Work of the Networks.....	71
Network Support Needs.....	71
Issues of Concern.....	73
Final Comments.....	73
Appendix.....	75
References.....	79
Acknowledgements .....	83

## Figures

Figure 3.1 The role of the drop-in .....	30
Figure 4.1 Model of fully functioning networks.....	51

## Tables

Table 2.1 Asylum seekers living in Glasgow supported by NASS: main national groups (number each year) .....	21
Table 3.1 The networks .....	24

## **Executive Summary**

This report examines the work of the ten asylum seeker resettlement and integration networks in Glasgow. The networks have been set up to co-ordinate local responses to the needs of asylum seekers in Glasgow since the implementation of dispersal in April 2000, and specifically to create a structure for the involvement of the voluntary sector in this process. The networks are area-based multi-agency partnerships which facilitate joint working across the statutory and voluntary sectors, while also encouraging community involvement. The networks have had to respond very rapidly to changing local needs associated with the arrival of several thousand asylum seekers in Glasgow, in a context where community preparation had not been carried out. This rapid pace of settlement has created significant challenges for the networks, which have at times operated under severe resource and time constraints, but they have nevertheless achieved a great deal. This research aims to examine their achievements to date, and to consider their future support needs. It also highlights issues of concern raised by the networks in relation to their work with asylum seekers.

The research was carried out by the Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice in co-operation with the Community Responses Co-ordinating Group (CRCG), and with input and support from the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC), Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS) and the European Refugee Fund. The research was carried out between April and October 2003, and effectively constitutes a “snapshot in time” on what is rapidly changing territory. The findings should therefore be viewed in this context. The research involved focus groups with representatives from the ten integration networks. These were later followed up with feedback sessions with the full networks present. These sessions gave the networks the opportunity to confirm focus group findings and for the researchers to explore key issues in more depth.

### **Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Glasgow**

The 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act resulted in the creation of the first nationwide system for the reception and resettlement of asylum seekers in Britain. Dispersal on a no-choice basis has been a key element of this policy, and for the first time, many asylum seekers have been resettled in Glasgow. Around 10,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Glasgow since 2000, representing a 60 per cent increase in the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population in the city. The resettlement process has been housing led, and asylum seekers have been dispersed to areas of housing surplus, primarily in areas of social deprivation. While racism and hostility towards asylum seekers is a national problem, the networks have faced an extra challenge in their work, as the needs of asylum seekers have had to compete with other acute needs associated with social exclusion and poverty. In this context, perceived competition over resources in dispersal areas has the potential to inflame harassment problems.

While the networks have achieved a great deal since their establishment, the rapid pace of resettlement, coupled with the increasingly complex needs of a maturing asylum seeker population have meant that the needs of asylum seekers have not yet been fully incorporated into mainstream service provision. The networks have highlighted a range of contexts within which they perceive a need for more support, and also clarification over responsibility for specific roles in relation to the provision of services for asylum seekers.

## **The Role of the Networks**

A key component of the UK policy framework for dispersal has been that it should occur in areas where there is potential for the development of voluntary and community support services. The preferred mechanism for the delivery of such services has been through the partnership model, which provides the opportunity for the statutory and voluntary sectors to work together to facilitate community involvement. Ten such partnership networks have evolved in Glasgow, covering most areas where asylum seekers have been housed. They have evolved under differing circumstances and have developed their own locally specific working practices, but all share a common goal: to promote integration between asylum seeker and host communities locally, through a range of initiatives. The work of the networks has to date been clustered around areas of immediate and urgent need. Until recently, this has prevented the networks from engaging in longer term strategic planning. The services provided by or through the networks have typically developed in the following way:

- 1) The earliest activities have been the establishment of drop-ins, run by local churches and supported by volunteers. The drop-ins provide humanitarian assistance and advice, helping new arrivals to orientate themselves to their local area, while acting as a safe regular focal point to meet other asylum seekers and members of the host community. As women have used the drop-ins to a greater extent than men, services for women and children have often developed around the drop-ins. The drop-ins have also taken on a signposting role, ensuring that asylum seekers know how to access other services locally, effectively acting as a platform from which to access other services.
- 2) The provision of English language teaching has been a key component of the work of all networks. This has been carried out both with the input of volunteers with ESOL qualifications (and supported by crèches), and through more formalised college based courses. In general, men have tended to use the formalised college provision to a greater extent than women, while women have relied on the teaching provided through the networks as it has been supported by crèche facilities.
- 3) Health visitors have generally been very active in the networks, and have highlighted the needs of asylum seeker women and children. In some cases, they have been able to make linkages with the drop-ins, and in this way, asylum seekers have been signposted to other local services.
- 4) Social events and one-off sporting events have been organised to encourage host communities and asylum seekers to mix informally.
- 5) Sometimes, other services such as befriending, youth work or advocacy have been developed, depending on available expertise within the networks.

- 6) Some networks have engaged in signposting to agencies providing assistance with retraining and access to employment. However, the fact that the right to work was revoked for asylum seekers in 2002 has limited the role that the networks can play in this area. It is anticipated that this will be an emerging area of work in the future as more asylum seekers gain refugee status.

### ***The roles of the voluntary and statutory sectors***

The voluntary sector has played a key role in all networks, with the churches being particularly prominent through drop-in provision. The voluntary sector active in the networks includes a wide range of organisations and individuals, from professionals working within voluntary agencies to individual volunteers with no professional experience. The relative roles of the statutory and voluntary sectors in the networks is an area which is still evolving and, at times, there was apparent conflict over their roles. There was a perceived need for clearer lines of responsibility for all agencies working with asylum seekers.

While the positive input from some statutory sector agencies such as Education, primary health care and Social Work is clearly apparent, the picture with other agencies has been more mixed, with both positive and negative reports. Individual volunteers often perceived that some statutory agencies were not yet geared up to meeting the needs of asylum seekers across the city effectively, and, that as a consequence, they had been carrying the burden of responsibility. While they have worked very effectively in this role, it was apparent that the networks were often driven by the input of highly motivated individuals, often from the voluntary sector. This raises questions over the longer term sustainability of support services for asylum seekers generally across the city, as the situation has rendered the networks fragile and vulnerable to the departure of key individuals and professionals. The findings from this research therefore point to a need for more formalised service provision with clear lines of responsibility, allowing the voluntary sector to focus on specific projects.

### ***The role of the state and conflicting policy frameworks***

Tensions were identified in relation to the policy framework within which service providers were working. There was a strong perception that there was an inherent lack of logic in the implementation of UK immigration and asylum policy, and that relationships between different bodies responsible for service delivery were disjointed and lacking in cohesion. This often left service providers in the networks unable to deal effectively with situations where asylum seekers were in acute need. Particular problems were raised in relation to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), which was perceived as “distant” and “unresponsive”, often leaving the voluntary sector to pick up the pieces where it had failed to deliver.

Frustrations were experienced over the conflicting policies emanating from the Westminster government and the Scottish Executive. Participants felt that their work was hampered by a punitive policy framework dictated by Westminster, while the Scottish Executive was seen to be giving out more positive messages and promoting integration work in a more positive way. Examples cited were the

withdrawal of the right to work for asylum seekers and section 55 (The Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002), which in combination can potentially lead to destitution among asylum seekers. Section 55 denies financial support and housing to 'late' asylum applicants, which leaves many asylum seekers without any means of support, but they are also unable to work legally. There was also frustration expressed over the ongoing evictions of 'failed' asylum seekers in the city. The network members were concerned that failure to address this situation at a higher level could have potentially negative repercussions for asylum seekers, community development work and race relations in Scotland more generally. Concerns were also expressed over the detention of asylum seekers at Dungavel. Many participants expressed a need for more devolution of some aspects of immigration and asylum policy.

### *Point of decision*

Concern was expressed over anecdotal reports of asylum seekers leaving Glasgow at the point of decision, when they receive refugee status. This was disappointing for the networks, which had invested much energy in making dispersal work in Glasgow. Although it was not possible to clarify the extent of this trend or the motivations behind it, the networks identified a strong need to ensure that the mechanisms in place to guide asylum seekers and inform them of their options at the point of decision were in place and functioning effectively. There were also concerns expressed that the current 28 day transition period is unworkable and encourages asylum seekers to move to other areas where they have relatives or friends who may offer support.

### *Network support needs*

The networks identified a range of support needs during the research process. A key support need expressed by all networks was for clearer agreements regarding responsibility for delivery of services by agencies working with asylum seekers. It was recognised that the mainstream statutory agencies have gone through a rapid period of adjustment in responding to the needs of asylum seekers, and that this is an ongoing process which is not yet complete. The networks also outlined conflicting demands on their time created by the constant need to apply for funding to carry out specific projects, which made longer term strategic planning difficult. These demands had to be balanced with other tasks such as administration.

The involvement of volunteers in the networks had been a crucial element in maintaining the overall capacity of the networks. However, this created a need for more formalised training procedures, which have placed more demands on the networks. Participants also understood the need to involve asylum seekers and refugees in their activities, but again, outlined the need for training to facilitate this process.



# 1. Introduction

## Background

There are now approximately 10,000 asylum seekers and refugees of more than 70 nationalities living in Glasgow, most of whom have arrived over the last three years. This represents a 60 per cent increase in the city's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population within a very short space of time, and has reshaped the demographic profiles of some parts of the city. In the context of a declining birth rate, an ageing population and a skills shortage in Scotland, refugees can potentially bring enormous benefits to the city in the future when they become settled. They have a young age structure, they are often highly skilled and their children are already playing a positive role in many of the city's schools. To facilitate the integration of asylum seekers into Scottish society, it is vital that appropriate services are in place to ease their transition and to ensure that they are able to use their skills effectively in the future. Without appropriate and effective support services, there is a risk that asylum seekers can easily become locked into a cycle of exclusion and dependency (Audit Commission 2000). It is therefore essential that support services for asylum seekers are evaluated effectively.

While the arrival of asylum seekers in Glasgow has generated some negative media coverage, there is also another less sensational story to be told, of the hard work of those involved in co-ordinating responses to the needs of asylum seekers. Professionals within the voluntary and statutory sectors and volunteers have worked hard to ensure that the basic needs of asylum seekers have been met in their new communities, and have endeavoured to make dispersal work effectively in Glasgow. Services have been co-ordinated and delivered primarily through the mechanism of local area-based partnerships (referred to as networks), which have worked to ensure that asylum seekers have access to appropriate services at a local level. The role of these networks has been to respond to the needs of asylum seekers at a local level and to facilitate their integration by building bridges between asylum seeker and host communities in dispersal areas. This has been implemented through the co-ordination and provision of locally based services for asylum seekers and a range of local community development initiatives.

This research was carried out over the summer of 2003 and it seeks to highlight what has been achieved by the networks to date, and identify the future support needs of the networks across the city. The report also raises other issues of general concern raised by the networks. The findings represent a "snapshot in time" on what is very rapidly changing territory, and even within the time frame of the research, significant changes and new developments were noted.

The research was carried out in co-operation with the Community Responses Co-ordinating Group, and with input and support from SRC (Scottish Refugee Council), GCVS (Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector) and the European Refugee Fund.

## **Aims**

As the networks are the primary mechanism through which support services for asylum seekers have been organised at a local level, this research has focused on the perspectives of the network members as a means of gaining an overall picture of both the nature of support provided for asylum seekers across the city and community development initiatives to facilitate integration between asylum seeker and host communities. The research has the following aims:

- to examine the role and activities of the ten local area-based asylum seeker resettlement and integration networks in Glasgow;
- to outline areas in which the networks have expressed a need for more support in order to maintain adequate service provision for asylum seekers;
- to identify barriers experienced by the networks, to the effective provision of services for asylum seekers in Glasgow;
- to examine the relative roles of the voluntary and statutory sectors in providing support services for asylum seekers in Glasgow; and
- to highlight other issues of concern raised by research participants in relation to the provision of services for asylum seekers at the local area level.

## **Methods**

This is the first of two reports that will examine responses to, and local impacts of the policy to disperse asylum seekers to Glasgow. This first report examines the situation primarily from the perspectives of the networks. It therefore represents the views of service providers, local people involved in the networks and a small number of asylum seekers who have been actively involved in network activities. It is intended that this should form the framework for the follow-on report which will address issues from the perspectives of asylum seekers. The research described in this report was carried out during the period of April to October 2003.

Focus group interviewing is particularly appropriate for obtaining differing perspectives on the same topic. It was therefore ideally suited to this research where the view of many diverse participants with differing roles and views were sought. The focus group method also facilitates a more open agenda than individual interviews allows. This proved to be an effective way to bring together participants with diverse roles within the networks to talk through different aspects of their work. It also provided opportunities for specific issues to be raised with appropriate service providers if necessary, particularly where there was disagreement or lack of clarity between agencies over roles and responsibilities. The focus groups provided an opportunity for the participants to come together and discuss issues related to support needs in a way which might not happen at a regular network meeting with a pre-determined and time-limited business agenda. In this way, facilitating interaction between participants was a very important component of the research process, particularly when exploring solutions to the support needs of the networks.

A set of focus group questions was constructed jointly with input from the SRC and GCVS (see Appendix). This was an outline of various aspects of the work carried out by the networks to be explored during the focus groups. The research was carried out by a team of three people: the author, a postgraduate student on a practical placement with the Scottish Refugee Council, and an assistant to take notes. The focus groups were carried out in the regular meeting places used by the networks.

***Stage 1:***

Focus groups were carried out, one with each network, by the team. A key individual in each network (usually a co-ordinator) was contacted in advance and asked to provide a participant group which was broadly representative of the network as a whole. They were asked to include a group of around five people, typically including an office bearer or co-ordinator, representatives from both statutory and voluntary agencies engaged with the networks, local volunteers or drop-in helpers and representatives from local Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) where applicable. The selection of participants within each network was left to the contact person, as they would be in the best position to evaluate which members were the key players in the networks. In most cases this mix was successfully achieved, but in some cases, key players were unavoidably absent. Any potential gaps were addressed during the feedback sessions in stage 2 (see below).

The sessions began by establishing some general information about the networks. Then the focus group method was used to explore issues related to the work of the networks (see appendix). Participants were asked to discuss the provision of a range of services, how effective they felt they had been in each area and factors which had either facilitated or impeded their work in each area. They also discussed work which they would like to develop in the future, and services which they felt were required but were not in a position to provide at the time of research. Questions were designed to steer discussions towards the support needs of the networks and to stimulate discussion about how these needs could potentially be met. Participants were also given the opportunity to raise issues which concerned them.

All focus group sessions were tape recorded to provide a full record for future reference, in addition to the notes taken. Due to concerns over privacy, participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and that no statements made would be attributable to specific individuals, agencies or networks. Any quotations used in this report are therefore entirely anonymous and are used to illustrate general points and to convey a sense of the perceptions of the participants, rather than to convey specific detailed information.

After the first round of focus groups, a set of preliminary findings was drafted to form the basis of a further single focus group with representatives from the SRC, GCVS and the Social Work Department, all of whom participated in several of the networks on a regular basis. This was used as an opportunity to outline key issues which had emerged during the focus groups, and to discuss any wider implications

of these findings. Issues requiring more in-depth clarification or wider feedback from the networks were also identified at this stage. Early findings from the focus groups were thus available to these participants for their own strategic purposes.

**Stage 2:**

Using the findings from the focus groups, the team engaged in feedback sessions with each network. These sessions were organised to coincide with the regular network meeting times so that all network members would be present and have an opportunity to participate. The networks members were supplied with information sheets outlining both the key findings from the focus groups which their own network members had participated in, and more general information about the findings across the city. The aims of the feedback sessions were to:

- give the networks the opportunity to verify the issues raised in the focus groups in which their members had participated;
- explore in greater depth key issues which had been identified in focus groups city-wide;
- assess the extent to which changes had occurred since the focus groups; and
- facilitate discussion within the networks regarding their support needs and how these could potentially be met.

Findings from both phases of the research have been used to form the basis of this report.

While the research process has been designed to hear the views of as many people as possible involved with asylum seekers in the city, it is acknowledged that it has not been possible to speak to everyone within the scope of this project. This report therefore represents a limited overview of some of the key areas covered by the networks and is by no means a comprehensive overview of all work with asylum seekers in Glasgow. The time limitations on participants within the focus group setting made it difficult at times to explore all issues as fully as anticipated, and some key actors in the networks were unavoidably absent. As this research represents the perspectives of network members, there are also areas within which it has not been possible ultimately to clarify some issues. Despite these limitations, it is hoped that this report might give readers a sense of the dedication with which the needs of asylum seekers have been addressed by a range of actors in Glasgow, and also a clear idea of where additional support and development is required.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical outline of the ways in which issues related to immigration and asylum are linked to discourses on social justice. Specifically it explores tensions between perspectives which define social justice and issues of social distribution as relevant primarily *within* a nation state, and wider perspectives on social justice which are based on more universal and international discourses of 'universal personhood'. This provides the context for the research and for the remainder of the chapter, which provides a brief historical outline of refugee resettlement policy in Britain, an explanation of definitions used in the report and a review of the resettlement process in Glasgow.

Chapter 3 outlines the origins, development and structure of the ten integration networks and gives a detailed account of the services provided through the networks and the activities co-ordinated through them. Chapter 4 goes on to provide more information about the structure of the networks, the relationships between the various sectors involved in the networks and their relative roles. Chapter 5 considers the way the networks have perceived the implementation of asylum policy in Glasgow, the barriers it poses to their work, and in particular, the perceived tensions between UK and Scottish policy frameworks for the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Chapter 6 outlines the future support needs of the networks and chapter 7 draws together the findings of this research, highlighting key findings.

## 2. The Context

### Introduction

The Scottish Executive is committed to delivering Social Justice in Scotland, a strategy which aims to build a society founded on the values of fairness, equality and opportunity for *everyone* in Scotland, where *everyone* matters and *all* are included (Scottish Executive 2000b). The Scottish Executive is also sending out clear and positive messages to the people of Scotland that refugees are welcome here and that their skills may form an essential part of Scotland's labour force in the future. This is in a context of outmigration and population decline, which may undermine future economic development. However, there is a lack of clarity over the extent to which this agenda can include asylum seekers and their children who are living in Scottish communities while their asylum cases are being determined. Since the implementation of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, which separated the social rights of asylum seekers from other UK residents, asylum seekers have become increasingly marginalized. The way we respond to the asylum issue has important implications for our economic future, but it also raises issues related to 'difference' in our society. This research gives some indication of the capacity of the state, the voluntary sector and local communities to respond to acute need and difference. It therefore has relevance for other 'outsider' groups who may have full citizenship right but are excluded in other ways. Hopefully it demonstrates why we should embrace more positive debates around the issue of asylum in Scotland.

### Integration, Resettlement and Social Justice

The asylum issue poses a challenge to theorists of social justice, as the concept of social justice is based on the delivery of rights to individuals who belong to a specific group or society. Most debates on social justice have therefore been largely confined to relationships between people *within* societies or nation states. However, there have been voices calling for broader interpretations of social justice which can acknowledge the increasingly interdependent world in which we live. In this respect, the definition of 'social' is contested. There are those who would argue that social justice should only be delivered within the context of the nation state, and others who assert that our definition of 'social' should be related to a more realistic interpretation of the global interdependence of nation states.

#### *Social justice within the framework of the nation state*

At present, the nation state is the key structure for the regulation and distribution of social rights. Social rights are primarily realised through membership of or residence in a nation state, and the right to exclude people from the nation state and its benefits is central to sovereignty. Rawls (1971) sees social justice as a form of contract or compliance between members who have equal rights within a social unit. This view of social justice relies on institutions (such as the welfare state) to maintain social justice, and it therefore entails both rights and responsibilities for its

members to maintain these institutions. As welfare states are closed systems requiring the ability to exclude (Walzer 1983), participation by outsiders in the set of rights and obligations of most nation states is determined by national immigration legislation. The perception that open borders could potentially undermine the practices and institutions which deliver social justice within nation states, means that most countries have immigration controls in place to protect these institutions. As the welfare state is one of the key mechanisms through which social justice can be delivered to individuals, immigration debates in Europe have often been centred on the need to protect the welfare state and thus to maintain the means to deliver social justice to existing members (Geddes 2000).

Incorporation of new residents into societies through immigration can entail both costs and benefits to a society, depending on a range of factors. Immigration has been shown to have positive effects on economic growth, and it can also create new jobs, add to the national tax base and expand demand for goods and services (Home Office 2001a – this research demonstrated that immigration has created an overall net gain to the UK economy). These benefits are realised primarily in periods of low unemployment when immigration is essential to maximise national production (Castles and Miller 1993). Castles and Miller also note that countries with high rates of immigration have generally fared better economically during the post war period than those with more modest levels of immigration. However, immigration can also increase burdens on the welfare state. The costs of supporting asylum seekers during the early stages of their resettlement are generally high, as expenditure is required for housing, welfare benefits, legal services and language training. This can create tension over resource allocation, particularly if there are competing interests associated with poverty and disadvantage. But this ‘burden’ should also be framed within a broader perspective, where refugees and their children may bring longer term benefits to a society. Refugees are often skilled (Kempton 2002; Kirk 2004; Charlaff *et al.* 2004), and may help ameliorate skills shortages once they have become resettled. Refugees can also potentially contribute positively to changing demographic balances in Europe generally, and particularly in Scotland, where a falling birth rate in combination with out-migration of both young and skilled people may undermine longer term economic development. This will depend on both the ability of refugees to utilise their skills and the commitment of receiver countries to facilitate this process.

### ***Social justice and ‘universal personhood’***

Harvey (1992, 2000) has argued for wider definitions of social justice which are not confined to individual nation states, but which reflect the global scale at which many political and social struggles are fought. Similarly, Black (1996) questions definitions of social justice which are applied only within the unit of the nation state, when we live in an increasingly interdependent world in which the exploitative actions of some nation states can have negative consequences for others. The actions of some nation states, and associated political impacts, can cause direct harm to others and may generate refugee flows in other parts of the world. Black also highlights the contradiction between the free movement of capital and goods across state borders for the benefit of some societies, without any

consideration of what constitutes just or fair exchange, and the restriction in movements of people according to national interests.

If social justice is to be considered within a wider global perspective, inequalities between asylum seekers and the host community in Scotland can be seen as a reflection of broader inequalities within the global economy, a situation which has progressively incorporated growing numbers of people into a global international migration system (Wallerstein 1974). Bauman (2004) identifies the negative impacts of modernization processes in many parts of the developing world, which have rendered significant numbers of people redundant within their own societies. These problems have been created by global processes which often have a destabilising effect on many parts of the developing world, and refugee migration can therefore be seen as a manifestation of deeper economic structural factors which engender political instability. Both Black and Bauman argue that it is unjust that countries adjacent to conflict situations, often some of the poorest countries in the world, should be left to shoulder the burden and seek local solutions to these problems, which are generated at a global level by processes which often transcend the spheres of individual nation states. There are therefore strong and valid moral arguments that nation states have responsibilities which transcend the narrow interests of their own political boundaries.

### **National Closure versus Global Humanitarianism?**

The delivery of social justice therefore presents a dichotomy between obligations to members of nation states and more general obligations to a global community. The regulation of migration in most advanced industrial societies has not in reality been determined solely by either perspective. Instead, policies towards migrants (including asylum seekers) have been characterised by a fluctuating balance between national internal mechanisms of immigration control and supranational instruments which confer rights on migrants.

The organisation of the globe into nation states has proved to be an inadequate basis for providing basic security to all inhabitants on the planet. Nation states are not only political communities; they are also spatial territorial entities. The relationship between humans and their physical environments means that it is not a matter of voluntary choice to belong to a nation state, but a matter of necessity for human survival, as all territory is divided into nation states. If nations act purely in their own national interests to preserve the institutions which deliver social justice *within* their spatial territories, then many people in the world will be denied access to any basic protection or justice, purely by geographical accident of their birth (Gibney 2004).

Recognition of this situation has resulted in the establishment of global mechanisms for the delivery of rights to individuals who do not have the protection of their own national governments. Internationally determined rules are increasingly being integrated into national institutions and shaping immigration and asylum policies within nation states. The Geneva Convention represents an attempt to create a set of universal rights which are not dependent on national citizenship. It is an



enduring supra-national instrument through which rights are extended to individuals who do not have protection in countries where they are citizens. It is the foundation of an international system of protection, conferring an absolute and non-negotiable right on individuals to seek protection in another country, and has arguably saved many lives over the last half century. Asylum is therefore a right for those who fit the criteria of the convention, and as such, a mechanism to protect human life beyond national borders. It transcends national prerogatives or preferences and limits the ability of states to impose barriers to entry.

There are also other mechanisms such as the European Convention on Human Rights, which has been incorporated into UK law as the Human Rights Act (2000). The act confers a range of rights such as the right to family life, which in turn affects the rights of UK residents to be reunited with family members living abroad. Asylum seekers in the UK have recently used the Human Rights Act to overturn section 55 (Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002) rulings which have rendered them destitute, as shelter has been deemed a basic human right. Thus the concept of global citizenship has been developed and built on through a succession of regional and UN policies and agreements on democracy and human rights (Castles and Davidson 2000). In this way, national immigration policies and the delivery of rights to non-citizens have evolved within an international context where discourses on human rights have played a significant role.

While supranational instruments have been important in developing a set of internationally defined rights, the realisation of these rights is ultimately dependent on the willingness of nation states to ratify and implement them. They are also curtailed by the ability of states to either detain or deport migrants and asylum seekers, and to render it virtually impossible to pursue asylum through legal channels (various pieces of legislation have rendered it extremely difficult for migrants from some countries to enter Britain legally to pursue their asylum claims). Soysal (1994) also observes that the rights of non-citizens generally may contract under certain political or economic conditions, where national interests may intervene to curtail the rights of migrants and asylum seekers.

### *The development of rights for non-citizens*

While national citizenship has often been a criterion upon which rights have been delivered to individuals, these rights and obligations are becoming increasingly dissociated from formal citizenship, being overridden by economic and political processes operating at a transnational level (Hammar 1990; Soysal 1994; Gustafson 2002). The development of international human rights discourses, and their incorporation into national policies, has led to a major transformation in the institution of citizenship and an expansion of the range of social rights being granted to non-citizen residents in most advanced industrial countries. The reality of dual nationality for many people has also rendered the boundaries of citizenship more fluid. Hammar (1990) identifies three gates of entry to the nation state: admission, residence and naturalisation. Right of residence without full citizenship characterises the status of many migrants in Europe since WW2, and pressures for rights for non-citizen residents have rendered national citizenship less important (Soysal 1994). In most Western European countries, the social rights of non-citizen

residents are almost identical to those of citizens, with the exception of voting rights (Soysal 1994), to the extent that permanent residence is normally the factor which determines access to social rights. While asylum seekers have not yet established the right to permanent residence, they have the right to remain while their claims to asylum are evaluated. There is therefore no specific reason why the social rights of asylum seekers should be any different from the rights of other non-citizen residents.

### *Asylum seekers and social rights in the UK*

The public debate on asylum in Britain (and elsewhere in Europe) has recently become confined to a narrow discourse of deterrence and exclusion, resulting in the contraction of social rights for asylum seekers. This contraction is part of the shifting territory of rights for non-citizens. Tensions between the distribution of national resources on the one hand and a broader human rights agenda on the other have led to the construction of asylum seekers as a 'burden' to British society, and have been a major factor in the restriction of social rights (Robinson 2003).

A historical overview of the rights and privileges afforded to asylum seekers in Britain demonstrates that at one time, asylum seekers were not treated differently from other non-citizen residents. Their rights have increasingly become separated from those of other residents without citizenship through a series of legislative changes during the 1990s, primarily intended to deter economic migration. In particular, the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act introduced a range of legislative changes which served to deny asylum seekers various forms of support to which they were previously entitled (Morris 2002). This may be 'justified' by the claim that asylum seekers have yet to determine their right to remain in the UK, and therefore to participate in the set of social rights and responsibilities which permanent residents share. However, from a longer term perspective, this lack of social rights during the waiting period may have serious implications for their prospects for future inclusion within British society. In particular, refugee children who experience their introduction to Scottish society in a context of social exclusion and poverty, may find their future life chances, and the contribution they can make to this society as adults, severely inhibited (Macaskill and Petrie 2000). This is one of the longer term social costs which must be considered when determining what the social rights of asylum seekers should be in relation to other residents.

### **Problems for Service Providers**

The way asylum seekers are treated while going through the asylum process is of key importance to service providers, who require clear guidelines regarding their roles and responsibilities. Documents outlining the government's integration strategy discuss *The Integration of Recognised Refugees in The UK* (Home Office 2000). They say nothing about asylum seekers. Despite this, the Scottish Executive provides funding for the integration of asylum seekers, who are also included in the recent Scottish Executive guidelines on Mainstreaming Equality (Scottish Executive 2003). There is a lack of clarity over the extent to which asylum seekers and their children can integrate under current policy. Despite living in our communities and attending our schools, asylum seekers do not share the same

rights as other citizens and non-citizens; they receive lower levels of benefits, cannot work and can be subject to detention without charge or trial. This creates fundamental problems of inconsistency for local service providers who are funded by the Scottish Executive to carry out integration work, as the majority of the services they provide have been used by asylum seekers rather than refugees.

This raises important questions regarding the point at which integration should begin. Other countries such as Denmark and Belgium house asylum seekers in temporary centres separate from local communities until they obtain refugee status, and it is not until this point that integration officially begins. NGOs in general argue that the reception phase should be seen as an integral part of resettlement policy, as integration should start at the point of arrival (Ager *et al.* 2002). In Scotland, there has been an active decision to house asylum seekers in communities from the outset, in preference to centres. While this is a positive measure, its implementation creates a clear and unresolved tension around the point at which integration should begin and the role that local service providers should play in supporting asylum seekers during the waiting period.

### **Tensions between Different Tiers of Government**

There are clear differences between the way that immigration is perceived in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK. Concerns about a declining birth rate, outmigration and skills shortages in Scotland have created a more favourable climate for immigration. As a result, the Scottish Executive has been signalling a welcome to asylum seekers. This is in direct contrast to British policy, which has been widely criticised as a policy of deterrence (Morris 2002; Robinson 2003; GLA 2004), stigma and control (Zetter and Pearl 2000). However, asylum and immigration is not a devolved matter and falls under the jurisdiction of the Westminster government. The Scottish Executive only has devolved responsibility for integration and social inclusion/cohesion, and is responsible for the provision of health, education and police protection to asylum seekers living in Scotland (Scottish Executive 2003). This creates another area of potential contradictions for service providers in Scotland, who are dealing with an integration policy framework conceptualised and funded by the Scottish Executive and a legal policy framework emanating from Westminster.

### **Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain**

Prior to 1999, there was no nationally co-ordinated system for the resettlement of asylum seekers or refugees in Britain. Resettlement policies were set up for specific groups on an ad-hoc basis in response to individual crises, which were seen as self-contained emergencies requiring specific responses. Special programmes were set up for refugee groups such as the Vietnamese and Ugandan Asians, with support structures organised to meet the specific needs of each group. Most refugee resettlement programmes of this type were characterised by a strong focus on the voluntary sector and self-help within the community. Wahlbeck (1998) argues that this has been a reflection of the perceived roles of the state and civil society in Britain, where there has been strong emphasis on the role of the 'local community'

as part of civil society. It also reflects the belief that the voluntary sector is better able to respond to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees (Carey-Wood *et al.* 1995). While there have been inherent advantages in this system, it has rendered any longer-term overview of community development with refugees very difficult to maintain due to the temporary nature of funding, under-funding, rapid staff turnover in voluntary agencies, and loss of institutional memory (Walsh *et al.* 1994; McFarland and Walsh 1995).

Prior to 1999, spontaneous asylum seekers were largely left to fend for themselves and use services on the same basis as the indigenous population. The numbers of asylum seekers entering Britain were modest during the 1980s when compared to other European countries such as Germany. This has partly been due to geographical isolation, but also to restrictive entry policies (during the early 1980s, countries such as Germany, Sweden and Denmark had more relaxed asylum policies than Britain). Refugees and asylum seekers therefore remained a distinct and relatively unimportant category outside mainstream immigration debates in Britain until 1989, when the numbers seeking asylum rose significantly (Kaye 1994). Increasing restrictions in Europe rendered Britain a more attractive option to asylum seekers, particularly those with knowledge of the English language. The British labour market has also been more favourable for immigrants generally. The continuing rise in numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Britain during the early 1990s prompted a change in climate, with debates focusing on a perceived need for more restrictions (Zetter and Pearl 2000). Robinson (1995) reports an atmosphere “bordering on hysteria” during the early to mid 1990s, when the media conducted a concerted campaign against asylum seekers, who were portrayed as “bogus”, and terms such as “invasion” were regularly referred to in the press.

This public discourse led to calls for restrictions, leading to successive changes in British immigration asylum legislation throughout the 1990s. Immigration and asylum has been one of the most legislated policy areas during the 1990s, with successive changes going hand in hand with the politicisation of the asylum issue. The 1990s saw a range of changes in British immigration asylum legislation, which have collectively reduced public expenditure on asylum seekers and resulted in the erosion of their legal rights and welfare entitlements.

*The 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act* restricted access and entitlement to housing for asylum seekers.

*The 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act* restricted access to social housing and welfare benefits, and entitlements to benefits for in-country applicants was removed. The Act also introduced restrictions on employment.

*The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act* reduced welfare entitlements for asylum seekers, replaced cash benefits with a voucher system and amended the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, ending cash payments for destitute asylum seekers. As a result, asylum seekers have fewer rights than other homeless people, and social work departments cannot provide them with support. The act was also specifically

designed, for the first time, to separate support for asylum seekers from support mechanisms for UK citizens and permanent residents.

The act also resulted in major changes in the way refugee resettlement policy is implemented in Britain. Two key policy outcomes of the 1999 Act have been, firstly, the centralisation of support services for asylum seekers under the co-ordination of one government agency NASS (National Asylum Support Service). Housing and support services are now contracted out by the government and delivered to NASS by regional consortia of local authorities, private landlords and housing associations. Secondly, a policy of compulsory dispersal has been implemented, with the stated aim of moving asylum seekers away from the London area to regions of housing surplus in other parts of Britain (Audit Commission 2000), primarily in the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland. These measures have also been associated with the explicit aim of expanding the role of the voluntary sector in cluster areas, and encouraging voluntary agencies to facilitate good relationships with local communities (Zetter and Pearl 2000). Glasgow City Council signed a contract with NASS from April 2000 to provide housing for asylum seekers in the city under this scheme. As a result, Scotland has for the first time received significant numbers of asylum seekers, the vast majority of whom have been dispersed to the city of Glasgow.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2002, the government withdrew the concession which had previously allowed asylum seekers to apply for their work restriction to be lifted six months after their asylum claim had been lodged. This means that asylum seekers may not work until they have received either refugee status or leave to remain.

*The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002* aimed to improve the efficiency of the asylum process. Section 55 (implemented on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2003) was a key component of the act, and allows the state to deny any support in the form of housing or state benefits to asylum seekers who are deemed to have lodged their claim for asylum 'late' (normally late applications are those lodged more than 72 hours after arrival in the country). This measure has the potential to exclude significant numbers of asylum seekers from the NASS support system, and in combination with the earlier removal of the right for asylum seekers to work (in July 2002), has the potential to render many asylum seekers destitute or reliant on the informal economy to survive.

The act also introduced changes in the rules applied to eligibility for British citizenship. Prospective citizens must now have sufficient knowledge about life in the UK and knowledge of the English language to qualify. They must also participate in a ceremony during which they will take an oath of allegiance to the Queen. People qualify to apply for British citizenship after five years of residence as long as they are not subject to any time limit under immigration law.

## Definitions

### *Asylum seeker*

An asylum seeker is a person who has exercised their legal right under the Geneva Convention (1951) to apply for asylum and is waiting for their case to be determined. The right to seek asylum is an absolute right determined at a supra-national level which, within the current policy framework, confers the right to reside in the UK until the determination procedure is complete. Asylum seekers can apply for housing and financial support from NASS. Those who claim housing and subsistence support are dispersed and offered housing on a no-choice basis in one of a number of cluster areas in the UK. Financial support is provided in the form of cash benefits at a rate of 70 per cent of income support, and council tax and other utility bills are met by NASS. Asylum seekers who can support themselves and do not claim NASS support may organise their own accommodation and are not dispersed. Since July 2002, asylum seekers have not been allowed to work. While waiting for their cases to be determined, asylum seekers and their children have the right to legal representation, legal aid, health care and education.

### *Refugee*

A refugee is a person who has received refugee status according to the terms of the Geneva Convention 1951, and may therefore remain in the UK indefinitely. The Geneva Convention defines a refugee as someone who:

“owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear or for reasons other than personal convenience, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” (Geneva Convention, 1951).

Refugees have the same rights as other UK residents to claim benefits and work, and they may choose where they live. Some asylum seekers whose circumstances do not fit the criteria for refugee status under the Geneva Convention, but are nevertheless in need of protection, are granted a different status, either in the form of Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR), which was applied until April 2003, and more recently, Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave. These additional categories are temporary and subject to review, though they include the right to work and other social benefits on the same basis as Convention refugees (with the exception of the right to family reunification). In this report, the term refugee is applied to anyone who has been granted leave to remain either indefinitely or on a temporary basis.

### *National Asylum Support Service (NASS)*

NASS is the national organisation which has co-ordinated and funded the provision of accommodation and support for asylum seekers since April 2000. NASS operates from the Home Office and is managed from Croydon. It is highly centralised in its operation, though a regional office has recently been opened in

Scotland. Glasgow City Council has a contractual obligation with NASS to provide housing units for asylum seekers in the city.

### ***Glasgow Asylum Seeker Support Project (GASSP)***

GASSP (also known as the Asylum Support Team) was set up and co-ordinated by Glasgow City Council in 2000 to ensure that asylum seekers were able to access basic services. The project includes staff from education, housing, health and social work services and the police. GASSP's core tasks are to ensure that asylum seekers are housed in accommodation of a suitable and safe standard, are registered with a GP and that their children have access to education. Bilingual education services have been set up in some schools to facilitate the integration of asylum seeker children into mainstream schools. GASSP also provides new arrivals with a welcome pack, which contains information about the city.

### ***Community Responses Co-ordinating Group (CRCG)***

The Community Responses Co-ordinating Group in Glasgow is a forum which brings together representatives from all the city's resettlement and integration networks. It is supported by Glasgow City Council and meets monthly, when issues of mutual interest and concern can be raised.

### ***Point of decision***

'Point of decision' is the term used to refer to the 28-day period directly after asylum seekers receive a positive decision about their refugee status (though delays in production of relevant documents by NASS often render this time period much shorter). During the 'point of decision' period, refugees need to make decisions about their future housing, and make arrangements for national insurance, welfare benefits and employment. They have the option to remain in furnished NASS accommodation, though in the longer term, renting unfurnished accommodation elsewhere will be much cheaper. At the 'point of decision', some refugees choose to move to another region of the UK.

### ***'Failed' asylum seekers***

A 'failed' asylum seeker is someone who has had his or her claim for asylum refused and is therefore no longer entitled to NASS support. While technically, a 'failed' asylum seeker has no right to remain in the UK, many have no way to return home either because no safe route exists or their country of origin may not accept them back. The term 'failed' is used in recognition of well-documented inadequacies in the legal processes through which asylum seekers pursue their claims for asylum (Amnesty International 2004).

## **The Resettlement Process**

The requirements specified by the Audit Commission (2000) for dispersal areas were that they should have pre-existing BME populations and appropriate support services locally. However, housing availability has been the primary criterion upon which dispersal areas have been selected, and asylum seekers have been resettled in areas of housing surplus. In Glasgow, this has been almost exclusively in high-

rise accommodation. Resettlement has therefore occurred mainly in areas with serious socio-economic problems, creating an extra set of issues for asylum seekers to face, including community safety and the potential for racial harassment (Macaskill and Petrie 2000; Buck 2001; Save the Children 2002). Dispersal has generally occurred (with some exceptions) in areas with no pre-existing BME communities, and therefore no locally based experience of issues affecting BME people. The dispersal areas were therefore ill-equipped to provide the necessary support to new asylum seekers when dispersal began.

Home Office guidelines outline the need for local authorities to engage in community preparation in dispersal areas prior to the arrival of asylum seekers:

“Local authorities have a role in providing adequate services to new and existing communities. As well as providing services, local authorities and local agencies need to have a joined up strategy in place to ‘prepare the ground’ for the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees.” (Home Office 2002).

The Home Office has asserted that local councils are best placed to respond to local needs in the resettlement process (Home Office 2001b), and similarly, the Scottish Executive has repeatedly stated that resettlement is a local authority issue (Buck 2001). Despite this guidance, no preparatory community development work was carried out with communities in dispersal areas in Glasgow, and asylum seekers arrived before local community groups were adequately prepared. This chaotic start to the resettlement process is replicated in anecdotal reports from researchers in other dispersal areas in the UK.

The general requirements for dispersal areas as defined by the Audit Commission (2000) across the UK were intended to include the following:

- Vacant housing
- Pre-existing BME populations
- The scope to develop voluntary and community support services
- Placement in language clusters

The combination of place-specific factors associated with Glasgow and the way in which dispersal and resettlement have been implemented there have created a set of specific outcomes which distinguish Glasgow from other dispersal areas in Britain:

- Specific nationalities have been dispersed to Glasgow (see Table 2.1). Collectively, the percentage of asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow who are granted refugee status has been around 80-90 per cent, which is significantly higher than recognition rates for some other nationalities. There is therefore more potential for asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow to receive refugee status.
- Housing allocated to asylum seekers has been almost exclusively high-rise.
- Most dispersal areas had no pre-existing BME populations.



- Language clusters were not created in dispersal areas in Glasgow.
- Glasgow has a strong history of community development which has facilitated new community development work in dispersal areas.

**Table 2.1 Asylum seekers living in Glasgow supported by NASS: main national groups (number each year)**

<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2003</i>
Turkey	640	850
Pakistan	395	547
Somalia	340	533
Iran	735	531
Iraq	730	424
Sri Lanka	285	352
Afghanistan	425	350
Congo Dem. Rep.	100	246
Algeria	125	212
Albania	130	125
Zimbabwe	50	141
Congo	85	112

Compiled using data from Glasgow Asylum Seekers Consortium (2003).

The Audit Commission (2000) acknowledged that one of the key problems in the implementation of dispersal was the fact that specialist mental health services, English language support and Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs are refugee-led organisations based on ethnicity or region of origin which provide support to refugees and asylum seekers) are largely concentrated in London. While one of the original aims of the dispersal policy at a national level was to create language clusters to enable efficient service provision in dispersal areas, this process has not occurred in Glasgow as NASS have not allocated housing on the basis of language groups. It is generally accepted that new refugees integrate most effectively through their own communities, and that RCOs are important facilitators in community development for refugees (Zetter and Pearl 2000; Carter and El-Hassan 2003), but the lack of language clustering has reduced the potential for the development of area based RCOs in Glasgow. RCOs were in the early stages of their development in Glasgow at the time of this research, but were not yet involved in the networks. RCOs have therefore not been the first point of contact for most asylum seekers in the city. The early experiences of asylum seekers have been direct dialogue with service providers in the host communities as a first point of reference, often through the local drop-ins.

In Glasgow, the placement of asylum seekers in areas with no pre-existing refugee or BME communities and the rapid pace of resettlement, have posed a specific set of challenges for service providers. Organisations working in dispersal areas often have little experience of working with minority ethnic communities and have had to learn and adapt very quickly. They have also required specific training to deal with issues affecting asylum seekers. The arrival of people of many new nationalities in the city has also made it difficult to develop adequate interpreting services for the city over such a short time period.

### **3. Service Provision for Asylum Seekers and the Role of the Integration Networks**

The Scottish Executive's current Equalities strategy recognises that needs among different groups in society differ, and aims to meet these needs within mainstream service provision. This approach therefore requires service provision to be sensitive to the needs of different excluded groups, and to change and adapt to encompass the needs of all groups in society (Scottish Executive 2000a), including refugees and asylum seekers (Scottish Executive 2003). This is to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees receive access to appropriate public services on the same basis as other UK residents. The Scottish Executive's chosen strategy of mainstreaming therefore does not promote separate specialist service provision for asylum seekers, but aims to monitor the changing needs of asylum seekers and other groups to ensure that their needs can be adequately met within the structures of mainstream service provision for the wider community.

Key areas of support for asylum seekers have been provided by statutory agencies, to meet the increased demands created by the arrival of asylum seekers. Statutory agencies have been responsible for a number of support functions:

#### ***Housing***

NASS has a contract with Glasgow City Council to provide housing for asylum seekers. During the early stages of dispersal, NASS allocated housing directly to asylum seekers on arrival. GASSP has now taken over the allocation of housing, making it possible to create a more streamlined reception process.

GASSP also carries out other functions including: reception and orientation, health care, education, social work services and policing.

#### ***Reception***

All new asylum seekers are visited by a caseworker, directed to appropriate services and provided with an information pack.

#### ***Health***

Outreach workers ensure that all new arrivals are registered with doctors and have access to health care appropriate to their needs.

#### ***Education***

All new asylum seeker children are enrolled in schools. Bilingual units have been established in some schools to facilitate the integration of asylum seeker children into mainstream education.

### ***Social Work***

Social care needs and family support functions are provided by caseworkers.

### ***Police***

A third party reporting system has been established for dealing with racial incidents.

Additional services provided by statutory agencies are:

### ***English language teaching***

Accredited courses in English language have been funded through local colleges.

### ***Interpreting services***

Interpreting services for asylum seekers are co-ordinated centrally through Glasgow City Council.

Although the selection of dispersal areas in Glasgow has been largely determined by housing availability, it was also the intention that these areas should have the potential to develop voluntary and community support services for asylum seekers. Previous experience has demonstrated the importance of involving voluntary and community organisations in supporting asylum seekers and refugees. Research has found that processes of integration are heavily shaped by perceptions and experiences of refugees and host communities specifically at the *local* neighbourhood level (Ager *et al.* 2002). It has been a central aim of the dispersal policy to expand the role of the voluntary sector in dispersal areas. Multi-agency working is seen as the basis of good practice in the provision of support services for asylum seekers and refugees (Barclay *et al.*, 2003) and in community development initiatives in dispersal areas.

In Glasgow, as elsewhere, local support services for asylum seekers have been delivered through area-based multi-agency partnerships (networks), which have been established to co-ordinating the responses to the needs of asylum seekers, and to facilitate the role of voluntary and community groups in this process. The networks are multi-agency structures which facilitate joint working across the public, private and voluntary sectors, while also encouraging community involvement. They are composed of a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and volunteers. These structures were not in place when the dispersal policy was first implemented as there was no city-wide strategy to facilitate a co-ordinated response from the voluntary sector. When dispersal began, many areas lacked any structure or forum for the voluntary sector to address the needs of asylum seekers (Scottish Refugee Council, 2001). The networks have therefore developed locally in a piecemeal fashion across the city during the period 2000-2002. The Scottish Refugee Council has played a strategic partnership-brokering role in some areas, and in some cases has initiated the development of local resettlement and integration networks, as has happened elsewhere in Britain (Carter and El-Hassan 2003).

## The Origins and Development of the Integration Networks

A total of ten refugee resettlement and integration networks were established in the city of Glasgow over a two-year period between 2000 and 2002, primarily in response to the need to facilitate coherent involvement of local voluntary and community organisations on a city-wide scale. The networks have established themselves and developed their working practices under locally specific circumstances. Some have been initiated through input from the SRC and GCVS, while other have developed alongside local SIPs (Social Inclusion Partnerships) or have evolved from specific projects (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1 The networks**

<i>Network</i>	<i>Year established</i>	<i>Stated Aims</i>	<i>Established through input from:</i>	<i>Asylum seekers 2003*</i>
Toryglen	2000	Service provision	SIP	218
North Glasgow	2000 (Nov)	Information sharing. Support for agencies working with asylum seekers	SIP	2,187
Castlemilk	2000/2001	Integrated service provision	SIP	355
Cranhill	2001	Service provision.	SRC	166
Gorbals	2001 (May)	Single issues. Awareness raising. Take lead in engaging service providers	GCVS/(SRC) Bridging the Gap Project	263
Govan	2001 (May)	Service provision	GCVS/(SRC) Govan Initiative, Govan Community Ministry	363
Maryhill	2001 (Jul)	Service provision	GCVS/(SRC)	172
Pollokshaws	2001 (Nov)	Service provision	Tenants Association / Social Work	732
Pollok	2001 (late)	Information sharing. Support for agencies working with asylum seekers	GCVS/(SRC)	439
Kingsway	2002 (Feb)	Promoting joint working and networking between agencies across the west of the city	SRC	839

\*Numbers calculated using data from Scottish Asylum Seekers Consortium, March 2003

The integration networks aim to facilitate joint working across both statutory and voluntary sectors and to co-ordinate and, in some cases, to provide services for asylum seekers and refugees at a local level. They also seek to build bridges between asylum seeker and host communities through various community development initiatives and social and cultural events. The networks have supported the development of drop-ins, language teaching and other services, and have also initiated various projects designed to bring together asylum seekers and host communities at a local level.

At the time of this research, some networks were well established, while others had been set up relatively recently and were still in the process of defining their direction. Their composition and the ways in which they have been initiated and supported has also varied, and for this reason they have not all shared the same aims and objectives, with some networks establishing working practices specific to their local needs. This disjointed developmental process and differences in local circumstances have at times made it difficult for the networks to join together and work collaboratively. In this sense, the networks are not one co-ordinated body of organisations across the city, as these participants clarified:

“Other people are talking about the networks as if they are sort of coherent, united ... constructing them in a certain way. People like the Scottish Executive, the Council, and maybe in reality they’re not actually like that at all.”

“We’ve all got our own ways of working which are relevant to the local area and we’ve evolved out of that.”

At the time of research, a number of the more established networks were in the process of redefining their aims in response to changing circumstances and needs in their local areas.

### ***Membership, structure and operation of the networks***

The membership of the networks varied considerably by location. Membership included a wide range of people and organisations, though not all attended meetings regularly (usually monthly) or were always directly involved with asylum seekers on a regular basis:

“In our network, there are people who are involved in many projects, who are actually doing completely different jobs, and that’s the same for everybody else. We don’t have a whole lot of people working with asylum seekers and refugees. We have people who are involved in other projects within the community that want to know what’s going on with asylum seekers and refugees and want to be involved when it’s appropriate, but they’re actually committed to other things.”

The typical structure of a network included elements of the following:

- A possible co-ordinator or project worker with a remit to work for the network
- A representative from the local SIP (if applicable)
- Representatives from statutory agencies e.g. Social Work, GASSP, the health service, the police, the local job centre, education, local colleges
- Representatives from voluntary organisations and community groups active both locally and citywide e.g. the SRC, GCVS, YMCA, Community Forum, Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees, Homestart
- Representatives from local church drop-ins
- Local organisations such as Tenants Associations and Community Councils
- Volunteers
- Asylum Seekers

This ideal structure was rarely achieved, and the composition of each individual network has depended on the engagement of local organisations. Similarly, rapid staff turnover in some agencies (both statutory and voluntary) involved in the networks has led to frequent changes in membership, and at times it has been difficult to maintain continuous linkages with some agencies. The engagement of volunteers and asylum seekers has varied, depending on the structures and working practices of the individual networks, and the degree to which there has been a defined role for them within the networks.

In general, the work of partnerships can be understood as existing somewhere on a continuum between information sharing to more integrated working arrangements involving service provision (Balloch and Taylor 2001). In this respect, a clear distinction can be drawn between the roles of the integration networks in Glasgow. North Glasgow and Pollok networks were concerned with information sharing and provision of support for agencies working locally with asylum seekers, while the remaining networks aimed to create integrated working mechanisms for service provision and were more directly involved in the provision of services for asylum seekers. These differences have inevitably impacted on the ways in which the networks have perceived their support needs. In the case of North Glasgow, participants explained that the aims of the network were partially determined by the large geographical area it covered (the North Glasgow SIP area), and the relatively high numbers of asylum seekers in that area. As many agencies have been involved in the network, it has developed its own ways of working relevant to these local circumstances. The role of that network was to act as a forum for agencies working with asylum seekers locally, to share information and offer mutual support. The structure of the network therefore did not facilitate the direct involvement of volunteers or asylum seekers.

Pollok network identified similar aims, and more specifically, its intention to move towards being a co-ordinating body for agencies working with asylum seekers locally. It had not been the intention at the start that this network should engage in

service provision. The fact that statutory services were not in place for the arrival of asylum seekers meant that the network had been required to respond to their needs in a reactive way.

The remaining networks were more concerned with service provision, though they stressed that in the early stages it was difficult to conceptualise a clear vision of their aims when much of their work was necessarily focused on meeting basic needs, which were in a continual process of change.

### ***Funding***

The networks have received integration funding from the Scottish Executive, the amounts being dependent on the number of asylum seekers in the network areas. While networks within SIP areas have been funded through their SIPs, non SIP area networks have received their funding from Glasgow City Council in 2002/3, and Communities Scotland in 2003/4. Communities Scotland also made a significant amount of funding available for city-wide initiatives. This arrangement is set to continue for 2004/5.

## **The Work of the Networks**

This section outlines the main services which the networks provide or support in their local areas, and discusses the ways in which these services have developed. It also identifies gaps in service provision and areas where more support or funding is required to develop them further.

Due to the nature of dispersal, service provision has been clustered around areas of specific and immediate need. The earliest service provision in each network area has been the establishment of drop-ins, usually organised by churches and committed volunteers. The drop-ins have offered humanitarian aid, advice and English language classes in the first instance, and have later acted as bases from which to access other services in the network areas. The drop-ins have therefore often been the first point of contact between asylum seekers and other service providers.

The provision or support of services through the networks during the early stages of their development has varied by network, depending on the availability of local expertise, and the ability to engage statutory service providers. For example, Govan network has benefited from particularly effective health outreach services for new arrivals due to the engagement of the health visitors in the network. This is a service which links new arrivals into the network, while also signposting them to other statutory agencies. Castlemilk and Kingsway networks have focused heavily on youth work as a way of making linkages between young asylum seekers and host communities in their areas, and this has been facilitated by the presence of local expertise in those networks. Pollok network feels it has been very effective in getting asylum seekers involved in local social events designed as a forum for asylum seeking and host communities to meet, as a result of input from community workers there. Many activities and events organised by the networks have been

one-off events, and often in response to perceived need rather than as components of longer term planning.

### *Drop-in services*

Drop-in services run by the churches have been set up as a priority during the early stages of dispersal in all network areas, and have been integral to the networks. Local people have been crucial in the day to day running of the drop-ins, which have played a valuable role in orientating new arrivals, and connecting asylum seekers and host communities. They have also been an important meeting place for asylum seekers of different nationalities. They have provided a safe and supportive environment within which asylum seekers have been able to access humanitarian assistance and meet members of the host communities.

Services provided by the drop-ins typically included provision of teas and coffees as a focus for social interaction, provision of second-hand clothes donated by members of the community, signposting to other statutory agencies and advice and help with translation of official documents and letters. Some drop-ins also provide IT facilities, sewing machines and other activities. The drop-ins have provided a regular point of contact for asylum seekers, a function which has been integrated with other forms of general support. The drop-ins, and the very personalised services they provide, were highly praised by many participants. However, there was concern that they were still not reaching enough asylum seekers. Some networks were looking at ways to reach more new arrivals, and expressed a need for more joined up working with other agencies such as NASS and GASSP, which could potentially facilitate outreach work by the drop-ins.

The rate of new arrivals was slowing down at the time of this research, and need for direct humanitarian assistance was therefore decreasing. The needs of asylum seekers have become more complex as they have passed through the asylum system, and it was acknowledged by most drop-ins that there was a need to reassess their role, and to consider how they could best diversify their activities to accommodate those changing needs. Drop-in volunteers were beginning to sense a greater need for ongoing “pastoral care” and more practical help, demonstrated by plans for an after school drop-in at Pollokshaws. Pollok network was actively assessing the needs of its drop-in through the distribution of questionnaires. In North Glasgow, the network had facilitated the drop-ins from various areas to get together and move forward on other issues related to policy and funding, and the churches reported that they had begun to expand their provision for asylum seekers into the broader community to support integration.

The model of the drop-in as a platform from which to access other services (Figure 3.1) has worked particularly well in Glasgow. This has been facilitated by the very active role played by the churches, and the ability to mobilise volunteers locally. The churches in Glasgow have a long history of involvement with social issues generally, and work with asylum seekers has built on this experience. The drop-ins have provided an essential first point of contact at a local level between asylum seekers and service providers as these reflections demonstrate:



“It’s been a great way of people of different nationalities to come together in a way that they wouldn’t ordinarily. So you do notice that there are groups of women and children that are very very close, and they are very dependent on each other. It’s good to see that and I think the drop-in has served that purpose. They come and see their friends and have a cup of tea, and that’s a very important role. There aren’t that many other venues they can go to.”

“I think what makes it good that if somebody for example is given a house in the middle of xxx from Afghanistan, the drop-in will give them a lifeline to go along and meet other people of their own culture and have a conversation in their own language and see a friendly face – it’s a lifeline to them and it’s well used.”

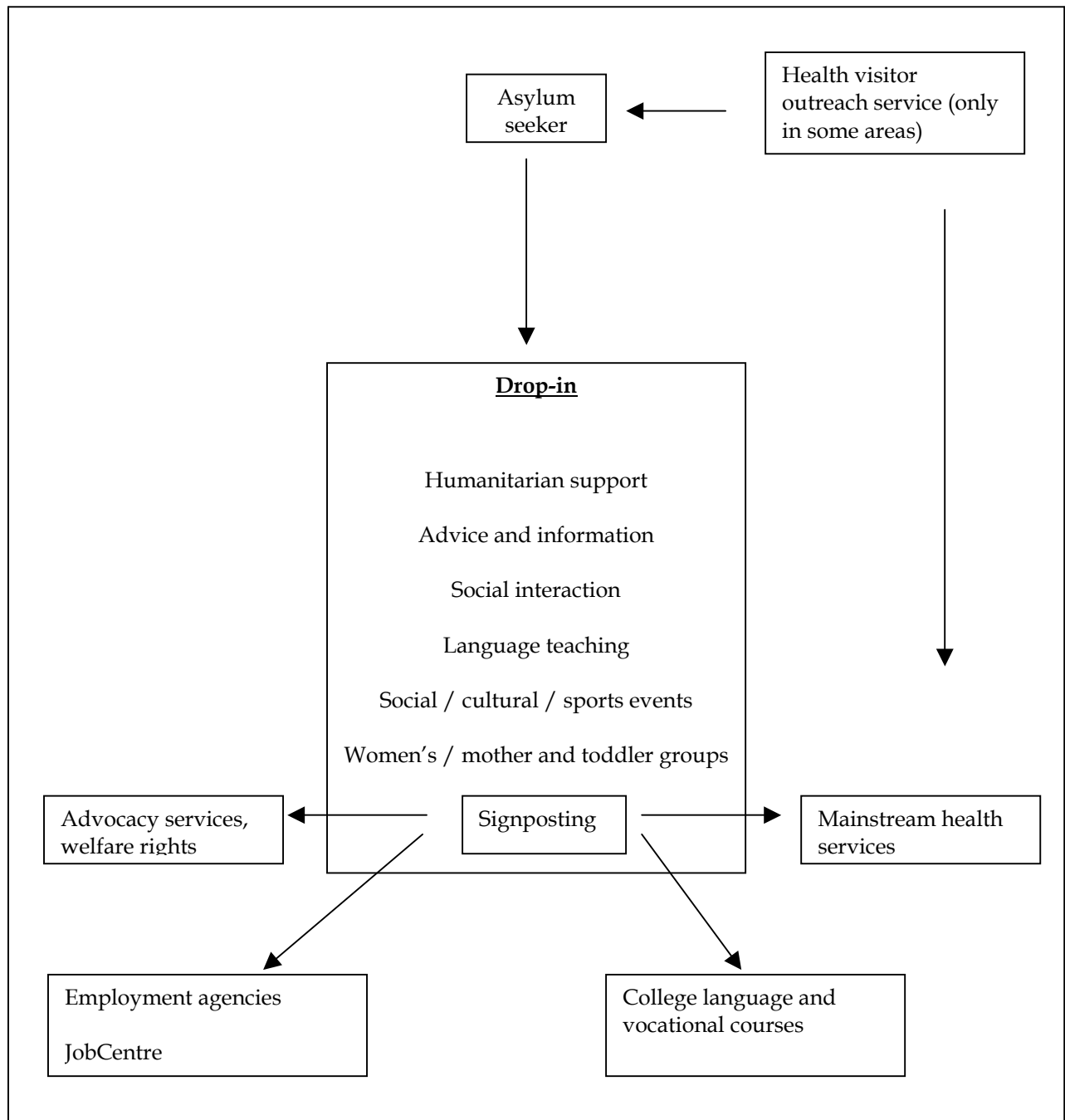
“People are beginning to make links across the language barriers ... friendships have been developing through the drop-ins.”

It was acknowledged that this role was changing:

“The aim of the drop-ins has changed. Initially it was very much about providing a safe place for people to meet and providing humanitarian aid. People donated clothes, kitchen equipment, all that sort of stuff, and crockery. We still have an element of that humanitarian aid, but not so much because the numbers being dispersed have slowed down.... There haven’t been people with the need that there was at the beginning.”

### ***Advice, information and orientation***

Some networks were offering this service in an *ad hoc*, piecemeal way in response to acute and immediate needs, primarily through the drop-ins, while others had adopted more strategic approaches and were delivering resources such as maps, welcome packs and translated materials to new arrivals. Participants expressed the need for access to more information about specialist support services across the city to enable the networks to signpost individual asylum seekers and refugees in the right direction and facilitate future orientation work. Govan and Kingsway networks were able to provide advice and orientation materials to new arrivals through the outreach work by health visitors, and Castlemilk network reported that they had developed effective links with mainstream service providers, which facilitated this process. Kingsway network had also set up an advice and information centre for asylum seekers in one of the areas covered by the network, though geographical coverage was incomplete. In general, the experience of networks suggests that many new asylum seekers have had difficulty understanding the nature of services being provided for them and network members have been experiencing stress in dealing with the increasingly complex needs presenting themselves. Volunteers have not always felt equipped to deal with issues, although it was felt that this situation was improving as people gained more experience. Networks which were not service providers did not consider it to be within their remit to provide advice, information and orientation, though North Glasgow network had supported local organisations in delivering particular services.



**Figure 3.1 The role of the drop-in**

### *English language teaching*

The provision of English language classes was considered to be working effectively in most networks, and participants reported that asylum seekers and refugees have been very keen to learn. Language provision has been operating at two levels, one on an informal basis through the drop-ins, where network members and volunteers with appropriate qualifications have offered classes, mainly for conversational English. This has been either in smaller groups or on a one-to-one basis, with crèche facilities. Other more formal classes have been running at local colleges, which have established good links with the networks. These classes have offered formal teaching with more emphasis on grammar and written English, and with qualifications attached. Although these different types of service were perceived as complementary, it was apparent that women were tending to use the classes at the drop-ins as they have crèche facilities attached, while men were more likely to attend the college-based classes. This may have longer-term implications for the ability of female asylum seekers to gain appropriate qualifications and enter the labour market. Participants highlighted problems in gaining childcare places at college courses. In some cases, college places had to be secured before childcare could be offered, but the delay in this process prevented some women from using the college places they had been offered. More joined-up policy measures here would facilitate better access to college courses for women.

Some drop-ins were planning to provide classes within different settings and contexts appropriate to individual needs. Kingsway network were attempting to diversify by integrating language learning with other activities. They were developing a pilot course for women and business, and were also encouraging children to learn through play, both being perceived as a more effective means of developing English language skills. These activities were being supported by the local colleges, which helped through funding and provision of materials. This network also expressed a need for more ESOL provision generally. Cranhill network reported that their funding for English language teaching had been cut and that they were falling back on volunteers to provide a service which had previously been provided by John Wheatly College. Overall, the provision of English language teaching was considered to be very good.

### *Community health services*

It was difficult to evaluate the overall role of community health services within the framework of this research, as the degree to which the networks had managed to engage health care workers varied considerably. Overall across the city, the provision of, and access to, primary health care provision appeared to be working well, particularly the work carried out with families by health visitors. They were often the primary link between the networks and mainstream health services. Govan network was particularly well supported by a very dedicated team of health visitors who provided outreach services to all new arrivals in that area and linked them up to mainstream health services. This was part of a Local Health Care Co-operative (LHCC) initiative, which had established a support team of district nurses and health visitors for asylum seekers. In North Glasgow, similar outreach

work was being carried out, and the local health visitors also provided a range of services and fed issues of general concern (such as domestic violence) into the network for further development. Maryhill network had planned to implement outreach work to encourage new arrivals to attend the drop-ins. It was intended that this would piggyback on outreach work carried out by the local health visitor, but staff changes had made this impossible to realise. In networks where such links were not in place, this was partially due to rapid staff turnover which made continuity of service difficult.

It was acknowledged, however, that there were some gaps, particularly in the provision of appropriate mental health services. Opinion within the networks was divided regarding specialist provision in this area. Although it was acknowledged that asylum seekers often had acute mental health needs, it was generally felt that they should use mainstream health services on the same basis as the rest of the population to avoid creating perceptions of preferential resource allocation. Some healthcare workers active in the networks reported that mainstream psychiatric services in particular, were having to take on new specialist roles with little prior experience, and were being required to absorb relatively high numbers of new cases within their existing capacity. In this respect, Yorkhill hospital was highly praised for its psychiatric work with children.

There were indications that the mental health needs of asylum seekers was emerging as an important policy issue within the NHS in Glasgow and that this process was beginning to feed down to the network level. A new initiative launched by the LHCC covering the Pollokshaws area will potentially cater for this extra need through additional capacity within mainstream service provision. In Cranhill, the "Positive Mental Attitudes" project, a voluntary mental health initiative, was also supporting asylum seekers in that area. While these initiatives are to be welcomed, they are locally specific, and similar initiatives are required across the city.

In general, access to GPs and the services they provide was praised, though in Cranhill there was a perceived reluctance among GPs to take on asylum seekers. Further enquiries revealed that some practices were full and were therefore unable to accommodate asylum seekers, who were being directed to specific practices outwith the Cranhill area. Participants pointed out that some locals and other new residents to that area had also experienced problems, indicating a general lack of capacity in the area.

Generally across the networks, it was agreed that there was a need to improve and adapt the role of health services to meet the needs of asylum seekers. At present, asylum seekers have access to health services on the same basis as the host community, but there are perceived gaps in mainstream services for *all* people, regardless of their background. It was reported repeatedly that inadequate interpreting services made it difficult for health workers to carry out work with asylum seekers effectively, accentuating access problems for asylum seekers. There was consensus across the networks that it was vital to get asylum seekers integrated into mainstream health care provision as quickly as possible after arrival

to allow them access to the full range of services available to them, but to have their specialist needs addressed within that framework rather than separately. In terms of future developments, the networks expressed a need to prioritise work for asylum seekers through local GPs and community health services, and to supplement this with individual support.

### *Advocacy*

Some of the networks were in a position to provide advocacy services depending on the expertise of the members, while others were only able to direct asylum seekers to appropriate services elsewhere. There was some debate regarding the extent to which the networks should be involved in the provision of advocacy. While it was generally recognised that there was a need to address gaps in advocacy services, some networks felt either that they did not have the capacity to do so or that it was outwith their remit and that asylum seekers should be referred to appropriate agencies.

It is a legal requirement under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 for people working with asylum seekers to have specific training before they may provide any advocacy or advice. Some networks had volunteers who had undergone appropriate training and were able to provide advocacy, while others were linked into organisations which could provide this service locally, and they were signposting asylum seekers to appropriate agencies.

Castlemilk Law Centre was cited as being very proactive in this area, and had been exploring the need for legal advice among the local asylum seeking population. The Castlemilk drop-in was also equipped to deal with immigration issues, and the perception was that asylum seekers often preferred to use the drop-in as they were familiar with volunteers there. In Toryglen, legal and welfare rights were available through Positive Action in Housing and the Distribution Centre, which were both attended by network members. In Kingsway, a project was being developed through the local SIP to provide legal advice for asylum seekers, and the Ethnic Minority Law Centre was holding a surgery in that area every month. The network was also developing further advocacy provision with SIP resources.

While some networks perceived that there were adequate advocacy services in their areas, concern was expressed over the lack of long-term strategic planning in relation to the provision of advocacy services for asylum seekers across the city. Gorbals and Pollok networks were planning to develop advocacy services in their areas, while Cranhill expressed a need for some form of advisory service but were not yet in a position to initiate this. There was a general recognition among most participants that this need was likely to become more acute in the near future, as increasing numbers of asylum seekers reach the end of the asylum process.

Networks with an interest in providing advocacy identified a need for specialist training, both to fulfil legal requirements, and to help people to deal with issues related to dealing with vulnerable people. However, most importantly, it was felt that effective advocacy provision needs to be established by GASSP workers across

the city to reduce dependence on volunteers, who are often not qualified to provide this service.

### *Services for women and families*

In general the networks felt that they had made significant progress in providing services for women and families. In their view, this had been related to a greater demand and uptake of services by asylum seeker women, which had been facilitated by the role of the health visitors. Also, as women have been users of drop-ins to a greater extent than men, it has been easier for the networks to gauge and respond to their needs in terms of service provision, and many of the drop-in activities have tended to evolve into women's groups, with crèche facilities.

The services provided for women have included a wide range of activities, some organised through the drop-ins, and others independently. Drop-in activities for women have typically included sewing and aromatherapy classes. The YMCA has also been active in most areas, providing services for women and families. Some networks (Maryhill and North Glasgow) have developed women's centres in their areas. Mothers and toddlers groups have also been a popular activity, and Kingsway network have developed this service to cater for specific asylum seeker groups. They have initiated a rotating scheme with six-week programmes targeted at integrating specific groups with the host community. Other activities have included Healthy Living groups, events around International Women's Day and the Jeely Piece Club in Castlemilk. The southwest community development team have also been developing work through the Castlemilk network and require funding to continue this work into the coming year. In Pollokshaws, Homestart has been active in providing services for women and families. Many of the activities in the networks have been one-off events, and participants cited lack of funding and time, along with over-reliance on volunteers, as obstacles to more effective provision in this area.

### *Work with young people*

Young people can play a key role in processes of change at a local level and should therefore play a central role in the development of social values and cross cultural contact. Their engagement is therefore critical if lasting change is to be achieved (LGA 2002). Overall, the networks reported that youth work had not been well developed, either for asylum seekers or for the host community. Participants discussed the general lack of facilities for young people in their localities, which made it difficult to build on existing services. Some networks did not perceive youth work as a priority, citing the school environment as a place where young people from different backgrounds could mix in a more natural way. They had therefore not prioritised youth work, preferring to initiate projects through local schools.

However, Castlemilk and Kingsway networks had made significant progress in this area and were working on innovative projects for young people, promoting integrated activities which would encourage local youths and young asylum seekers to mix. These included homework groups, football tournaments and summer youth projects. Sport was cited as a particularly effective medium for

constructive dialogue between young people. Castlemilk network had been able to target young people for specific events through the bilingual unit at Castlemilk High. In Pollok, work with young people has been carried out through STAR (Student Action for Refugees) and in North Glasgow, individual member organisations were carrying out individual pieces of youth work in the area.

Previous research in Glasgow has highlighted issues of community safety for young asylum seekers, many of whom have been subjected to harassment and anti-social behaviour (Mackaskill and Petrie 2000; Save the Children 2002). This was also raised by participants, who pointed out that most integration activities tend to be organised during the day while young people are at school, as evening activities have been poorly attended by asylum seekers, many of whom do not feel safe going out at night. Also, in areas where schoolchildren were bussed out to schools in other localities, the opportunities for them to mix socially in their local areas was very limited without specific youth work being undertaken. This was cited as a serious barrier to integrated youth work in some areas.

This is therefore an area which is likely to see significant developments during the coming year and is likely to require more funding. Some networks also identified an acute need for anti-racist awareness training aimed specifically at those working with young people. Integrated youth work generally, was seen as a very worthwhile area in which to invest resources, given that young people will form the next generation of adults and the social values they develop.

### *Culture and leisure activities*

Culture and leisure activities can be a powerful tool to engage diverse sections of the community, and break down barriers between different groups. Sporting activities in particular were seen as a very useful way of uniting people around a single issue. Culture and leisure activities as discussed in the focus groups fell into two clear categories, firstly, local activities organised by the networks, and secondly, mainstream culture and leisure facilities provided for the whole community.

Informal and locally organised activities and social events were recognised as a key activity in promoting social cohesion and building bridges between asylum seeker and host communities. The networks had engaged in a range of innovative events designed to encourage asylum seeker and host communities to mix socially. Celebrations, parties, trips and sporting events had been organised by individuals and organisations within some networks. Pollok network provided a highly successful summer arts and music programme, linking into a larger city-wide project. This culminated in the "Big Day Out" in Pollok, an event including a ceilidh and activities involving asylum seekers' own national dress and dance. This event was primarily social, but professionals were also present to provide appropriate support if need arose. This event was praised as a highly successful way of initiating natural and lasting friendships. Similarly, Maryhill network reported the success of their Arts week, which had been enjoyed immensely by the asylum seekers. Volunteers in Maryhill network had organised a number of highly successful summer outings for asylum seeker and host community families to come

together. Kingsway network had organised several successful sporting events on an informal, one-off basis. Govan network also had plans to develop activities around sport, and the Community Action Team (CAT) had played a key role in several networks in this respect.

Such events had created potential for productive dialogue between refugee and host communities. They were generally organised on a one-off basis rather than as part of on-going programmes of events, and the networks overall were keen to develop more of this type of activity. However, in some cases, lack of funding, time and appropriate premises had been significant obstacles, and disappointment was expressed over the limited extent to which host communities had participated in local events.

The use of mainstream culture and leisure services by asylum seekers was largely dependent on their local availability and cost. Affordability of some services was perceived as a problem and a need was expressed for existing services to be opened up more to allow access for asylum seekers. It was suggested that offers of concessions for entry to some services could facilitate this, although there were concerns that this may be perceived as discriminatory. However, it was pointed out by some participants that the situation was a reflection of lack of quality provision in host communities generally, and that many locals could not afford to use these services either.

### *Befriending*

Befriending can occur either on a formal basis where structured befriending services are set up, or through more informal means. Informal befriending was reported to have evolved naturally around the drop-ins in some networks and it was not felt necessary to set up formal services, though there was a perceived difficulty with this process where asylum seekers were living in multi storey housing. Although the networks themselves had not initiated formal befriending schemes, some schemes were operating locally and being run by voluntary groups and volunteers in the networks. Pollokshaws network discussed the success of the scheme operated by Homestart in their area, and the way it had been strongly supported by volunteers. The network had partially supported this work through modest funding. In North Glasgow, the YMCA offered a mentoring scheme to refugees at the point of decision.

Kingsway, Govan and Gorbals networks expressed enthusiasm for initiating befriending schemes, but stressed that they would require support to implement these. However they also highlighted the need to consider development of clear policies associated with befriending services, specifically relating to issues of confidentiality and setting of boundaries to protect both volunteers and asylum seekers. They stressed that there should be formal training for befrienders, who may find themselves supporting asylum seekers through difficult situations and ongoing crises in their lives. As one participant pointed out:

“You’ve got to know as an individual what you can and can’t do, otherwise you’d crack up.”



There was also concern that volunteers would need to be equipped with adequate information about different cultures to avoid causing offence or creating misunderstandings.

“I also think we need a lot more information about the different cultures so that you don’t cause offence without knowing..... There are little things of which we are unaware. We need more cultural awareness training.”

### ***Education and training***

Education and training is likely to emerge as a key area of work across the networks in the future, as the asylum seeking population in Glasgow becomes more established. Overall, education and training was not an area which had been tackled to any significant extent across the networks due to more immediate pressures. The fact that many of the services until now have been primarily for asylum seekers rather than refugees has meant that there has been more emphasis on issues affecting asylum seekers in the early stages of their resettlement. The networks were able to have an input into adult education through involvement with local colleges. The networks cited effective links with the following colleges in their areas: Langside, Cardonald, John Wheatley and Stow Colleges, as well as the Nautical College. These links have been very important in ensuring asylum seekers have had knowledge of courses available locally and have been able to access appropriate training where necessary, to help them rebuild their careers. Some networks have co-ordinated and promoted taster sessions of mainstream courses at the colleges. Other networks without formal links to colleges have signposted asylum seekers to relevant agencies or colleges. Govan network expressed a wish to develop this further, but were unable to at the time of research due to lack of appropriate premises and funding. They also required to assess the needs for education and training in their area. Maryhill network was keen to learn from other areas of work such as catering for people with learning disabilities.

### ***Employment***

Facilitating access to employment was not generally perceived as a priority by the networks, particularly since the right for asylum seekers to work was revoked in July 2002. Participants largely regarded this as an area of future activity once more asylum seekers had been granted refugee status. Pollokshaws network had already set up projects in this area prior to July 2002, which they have not been able to implement since the right to work was revoked. However, some networks had been involved in initiatives to improve access to employment for refugees.

Glasgow North Limited is an agency which works across all community groups in the area to facilitate access to employment. It has been adopting a range of approaches specifically with asylum seekers, but again, the withdrawal of the right to work for asylum seekers has limited the service Glasgow North can provide to this client group. In Pollok, employment of refugees was being addressed through a local economic development company and the local SIP. Kingsway network had become involved in the Bridges Project, providing some support in accessing employment. Toryglen network had dealt with some issues related to employment,

but on a reactive basis as needs presented themselves. Cranhill network cited “Working Links” as a local access point to employment after status has been gained. Other networks cited loose links with their local JobCentre Plus, to which refugees were referred.

Some participants felt that facilitating access to employment was outwith the remit of the networks. Access to employment is a key aspect of the transition to refugee status and participants stressed the need for the Resettlement Team to engage with employment issues, rather than leaving this to the networks.

### ***Religious observance***

The religious diversity of the asylum seeking population has created an increased demand for places of worship. Most participants regarded religion as a private matter, with their role being seen primarily as signposting to the various places of worship within Glasgow. This has mainly occurred through the drop-ins. Some provisions were being made for religious worship; for example in North Glasgow, St Rollox church has supported an Iranian church service and a French language service on Saturdays. St Rollox has been open to adapting its services to reflect cultural differences, although much of the present provision is for Catholic worship. Cranhill network was considering approaching its local churches to request space for alternative faith worship. Kingsway network was also approaching local mosques to request them to implement outreach work to new asylum seekers.

Some networks expressed a need for more awareness and understanding about various aspects of asylum seekers’ religions. This issue raised some debate as to its relevance to the networks, and it was felt by some participants that asylum seekers are in general resourceful enough to find their own way to relevant places of worship.

The services outlined above are the key services which have been provided by or through the networks. Other services may be provided on an ad hoc basis in response to local initiatives. Networks expressed concern over the provision of interpreter services, given that they are vital for accessing many other services. It was regarded as problematic by some service providers that interpreting is funded by Glasgow City Council, through a centralised agency external to the networks. This has created difficulties to access other services which require interpreting to function effectively. Apparently, not all service providers were aware that this service exists or how it could be accessed.

## **Challenging Myths and Lobbying Decision Makers**

Challenging myths about asylum seekers at a local level is an important component of community development which the Home Office recommends should be carried out in dispersal areas (Home Office 2002). Ager *et al.* (2002) argue that perspectives at the local area level and the role of host communities are a vital component of ‘integration’. If racism is a problem at this level, it will impact negatively on the extent to which asylum seekers will participate in activities in their local

communities. Tackling myths and prejudice at a local level is therefore an important aspect of integration.

The networks acknowledged the importance of promoting positive images of asylum seekers in their local communities in order to build effective bridges between asylum seeker and host communities. The extent to which they had directly implemented work aimed at challenging myths varied considerably, and their strategies included both formal and informal methods. They highlighted the impacts of dispersing asylum seekers in areas of relative deprivation and the perceived competition over resources. Discussions revealed that many myths regarding preferential treatment were circulating in local areas:

“People *do* think they get cars. People think they go into this plush, palatial house.”

“People come out with: ‘I’ve got to pay £35 a month for satellite telly and they get it for nothing’. They seem to think that they get everything.... and then all this money that they get.”

Participants highlighted how vital it is to tackle myths at street level where they originate. The dominant method occurred informally, through addressing racist views on an individual, face-to-face basis:

“We’re trying to tell them that if it’s only one person in the house then they’ve got one plate, they’ve got one cup, one spoon, one fork, one knife and one chair, but it just doesn’t seem to sink in. It’s the press. It all comes back to the press.”

They also expressed a need for formal and more targeted anti-racist awareness training to address these issues:

“When talking about race training and equalities training there’s particular elements about asylum seekers which need to be added onto that training, because yes, there’s racism, but with asylum seekers it’s also jealousy about resources. It’s about ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ asylum seekers. It’s about why they’re in the country, and that, added onto the racism thing creates a more potent package of harassment problems.”

A common formal method of tackling myths has been through the distribution of information leaflets in local communities during the early stages of dispersal. The leaflet created by Greater Pollok SIP was cited as a pilot leaflet in this respect, and had subsequently been adapted and used by other networks. The networks which had distributed information leaflets felt that this had been an effective measure, and some networks were discussing the possibility of producing another leaflet to be distributed through various local organisations such as housing and tenants associations. Maryhill network were producing a regular newsletter as a means of dispelling myths more effectively. Other work in this area included a Positive

Messages subgroup within Maryhill network, as part of a more planned approach to tackling myths surrounding asylum seekers and refugees.

Participants made reference to the factual information about asylum seekers disseminated through the networks from the CRCG as a useful tool to assist in the work of countering myths. It was suggested that information fed through the networks helped to give its members more confidence to tackle myths about asylum seekers and refugees. One network went on to suggest that the Scottish Refugee Council could play a key role in providing accurate and current facts on asylum issues to strengthen the knowledge base within the networks, enabling them to tackle myths more effectively.

Most participants were also aware of the potential dangers involved in drawing too much attention to the work of the networks within their local communities. It was felt that if work in challenging myths was not handled very carefully, it could potentially fuel racism. The networks have been operating within a wider national context of racism and hostility towards asylum seekers, particularly in the national media, and they accepted that there were limitations to the effectiveness of their work in this area:

“The government should be doing something about the irresponsible media coverage, because virtually every time the issue of 'asylum seeker' comes in the news, it's accompanied by a film of people trying to rush the channel tunnel. What has this got to do with asylum seekers? The government doesn't seem interested in the negativity [faced by asylum seekers]. The government is not doing anything about it and I think asylum seekers' greatest need is a government that stands by its international responsibilities.”

The networks were very reticent about the idea of engaging with the media to challenge myths. Some groups expressed a willingness to do so if their purpose was clearly explained and asylum seekers were properly supported, for instance by the provision of translated material. Other groups were extremely cautious due to past experiences which had reflected poorly on the asylum seeking community. Furthermore their experience showed that individual asylum seekers and refugees wanted to blend into their local areas and generally did not want to be identified through the media.

Some participants felt that challenging myths fell outwith the remit of the networks, and others said that they would need support and training before they could carry out this task effectively. The role of the GARA's (Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance) anti-racist training, “Training for Change”, was cited as a positive development in this area. The training, which has been piloted in Gorbals, Kingsway and Pollokshaws, involves anti-racist training sessions with local agencies and community activists. Participants praised this and highlighted that similar initiatives would be welcomed.

Some of the networks were involved in lobbying decision makers on an individual, *ad hoc* basis as issues arose, sometimes with the backing of their local MPs.

However, the fact that immigration and asylum is not a devolved matter was seen as a serious barrier to effective lobbying, and participants felt that they had no power to influence what they perceived as very negative policy measures emanating from Westminster. Within a Scottish context, it was highlighted that the networks have the potential to liaise with other organisations such as the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum and the CRCG to raise certain issues:

“Attending the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum and meeting the Scottish Executive, I mean that’s getting your view over, and they’re carrying that forward. So we’ve had an input at that kind of level. What we’re voicing is already in the Integration Forum draft. We’ve had a lot of input into that.”

The ability to lobby key decision makers at a more strategic level was seen by some networks as an activity to undertake in the future, once the networks were stable and consolidated. This could potentially give the CRCG a more important role in the future in terms of more concerted and targeted lobbying.

## 4. Relationships

This section explores the structure of the networks in more depth and the relationships between the different organisations represented within them. The networks have focused primarily on co-ordinating responses to needs specifically at a local level, but there were also mechanisms through which the networks could link together and act coherently at a city-wide level over issues of concern.

### The Statutory Sector

The network structures were developed to facilitate the participation of key statutory agencies working with asylum seekers. Overall across the networks, there was no clear picture regarding the extent to which the networks had been effective in engaging service providers within the statutory sector, as there was considerable variation by network. Specific statutory agencies were participating in some networks, but not in others. Pollokshaws network pointed out that they were not clear about the extent to which statutory service providers in their area were working effectively, as many organisations that were not engaging directly with the networks may still have been providing services for asylum seekers. In this respect, asylum seekers themselves may be in the best position to evaluate the role of the statutory sector. North Glasgow and Toryglen networks reported that their local SIPs had provided an effective framework for statutory sector participation in the networks. However, other networks had experienced particular difficulty in engaging some statutory organisations, and there was a perception that the burden of responsibility had been left to local community and voluntary organisations.

Representatives from Social Work were present in all networks, often playing a key supportive role. The role of community health services in general was also perceived very positively, with health visitors in particular, playing a vital role. Their links into the networks helped to facilitate signposting to other services. Representatives from Local Health Care Co-operatives were also present in some networks. Education services were also praised by the networks, particularly in relation to the bilingual units established in some schools.

Overall, concerns were raised in relation to a lack of clarity over the roles and responsibilities of some statutory agencies. Key examples cited were cases of destitution and incidents where NASS money orders had failed to arrive, both leaving asylum seekers with no means of support. It was not possible to clarify responsibility for these situations during the research process, as the responses given by participants from statutory agencies were often inconsistent. Within the networks generally, participants expressed frustration over the lack of clear lines of responsibility for such cases, and the fact that they were often left to deal with crises of this nature. In some cases it had become apparent that mainstream statutory services had been referring asylum seekers on to voluntary sector providers for support when they were unable to help.

## **GASSP**

GASSP (also known as the Asylum Support Team) was set up by Glasgow City Council to carry out individual casework with new arrivals and to ensure access to mainstream health and education services. The role of GASSP, and the extent of its engagement with the networks, varied very significantly by network, suggesting that the input of individual caseworkers was very different across the city. Three networks, Gorbals, Pollokshaws and Cranhill viewed the role of GASSP very positively, and reported satisfactory engagement with the networks. Crucially, they reported that GASSP had also been engaging with asylum seekers at the local drop-ins and were aware of the issues facing volunteers working there. However, other networks reported considerable difficulty in engaging local GASSP workers. As the role of GASSP is to ensure access to services locally, it would clearly be beneficial for the agency to be working with the networks, and some participants expressed considerable frustration over the difficulties they had experienced in engaging GASSP workers.

Drawing together the views of all of the participants, it appeared that the engagement of GASSP caseworkers with the networks was dependent on the working practices and commitment of individual workers within the organisation. In relation to services provided by GASSP, research participants in the networks explained that from an asylum seeker perspective:

“It depends where you live here, what kind of service you get.”

Similarly, participants highlighted lack of engagement from GASSP as problematic:

“We work in partnership with other agencies. It just seems to be GASSP we have problems with.”

The key problem reported by some networks was related to perceived inaccessibility and unresponsiveness. There was also a perception among volunteers in specific areas that GASSP had not carried out home visits. Volunteers had filled these gaps where need arose, but had been unable to establish contact with GASSP to verify details. There were also a number of cases reported where GASSP had failed to intervene in crisis situations, leaving volunteers to cope. Some drop-in volunteers perceived an unwillingness by GASSP to deal with volunteers acting on behalf of asylum seekers, as this comment by a volunteer demonstrates:

“You’re a volunteer. You don’t have any status.”

More detailed discussions around the role of GASSP in the later feedback sessions (some of which were attended by GASSP caseworkers) revealed some of the reasons for these problems. Participants reported that GASSP were under-resourced, a factor compounded by long-term staff sickness, and rapid staff turnover. Often, positive linkages between individual caseworkers and the networks had been lost under these circumstances.

This research was carried out over a period of six months, and during that time, changes in the working practices of GASSP were becoming apparent through accounts from participants. By the time of the round of feedback sessions, there was evidence that progress was being made and that in areas where problems had been reported, GASSP workers were beginning to engage with some networks and attend network meetings.

## **NASS**

Although NASS does not have a specific remit to engage with service providers at a local level, there are issues related to the way NASS operates which have impacted on the networks. The problems experienced by the networks were similar to those reported recently by the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), which found: "serious and systematic problems with the standard of service provided by NASS" (NACAB 2002). There was a general feeling among the participants that the voluntary sector effectively "props up" NASS. Many difficulties were reported over direct dealings with NASS, which, as an organisation, was considered to be "distant" and "inaccessible". There was also a perception that NASS staff were reluctant to deal with volunteers acting on behalf of asylum seekers. Repeated problems were highlighted over late payments for asylum seekers and money order books failing to be sent in time. These administrative problems left many families with children and babies without support, sometimes for extended periods. Volunteers at some networks described how asylum seekers who had not eaten for days regularly turned up at church drop-ins seeking assistance. There was considerable resentment among volunteers that Social Work departments had refused to intervene in such cases (despite the fact that by law they are not able to) and again there was lack of clarity regarding the role of statutory agencies in this context. Attempts by volunteers to intervene through communication with NASS were not always effective. It was reported that appropriate measures were often not implemented by NASS to rectify mistakes, often leading to further delays.

## **The Voluntary Sector**

The current dispersal policy has been formulated with an explicit aim to facilitate an expansion of the role of the voluntary sector in cluster areas, through locally based community development work with asylum seekers, refugees and host communities (Zetter and Pearl 2000). The role of the voluntary sector in the networks has been of key importance. Professionals within the voluntary sector have played a key role in the networks, often either facilitating the development of the networks or initiating specific projects. The churches have also played a very prominent role city-wide, primarily through drop-in provision. In Castlemilk the churches were cited as being the "lynchpin of the network", and the driving force behind its activities. Through their involvement with asylum seekers at a local level, the churches more generally have been able to play a vocal political lobbying role in campaigning on behalf of asylum seekers, specifically against detention at Dungavel, and in deportation cases. The role of individual volunteers has been crucial in this respect.



Most of the local work undertaken by the voluntary sector was not part of any wider strategy to prepare the ground for asylum seekers in Glasgow, or to ensure that appropriate services were in place before their arrival. It has been more of an *ad hoc* reaction to acute need, where gaps in services have been addressed as they have arisen. In some cases, there were clear misunderstandings about the role of community and voluntary organisations, which had not expected to play such a key role in the early stages:

“We thought that all the agencies out there would be up to speed and they would actually be taking it on board, and what we would do was just to advertise in the community what services the community was making available for asylum seekers. That’s the role we thought it was going to be. But then it turned into more seeing what their needs were. Nobody was picking that up. The churches and local people organised that.”

Although many voluntary agencies have been active in the networks, the agencies cited as key players in the networks have been: the Churches, The Scottish Refugee Council, YMCA, Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector, Victim Support, Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Forum, Community Action Team (CAT) and Homestart.

## **The Host Communities**

The extent to which the networks had successfully engaged the local host communities was very mixed. Most networks had managed to draw in significant numbers of volunteers, who had been active in various activities. They generally reported that they had large numbers of very committed local volunteers, and some networks also had volunteers from outside their areas. The input of local volunteers has been essential for the networks to function effectively, and has significantly increased their capacity. Often it has been the volunteers which have created the critical mass to enable the networks to carry out many of their functions:

“The volunteers keep the network ticking over. The network wouldn’t function without them.”

Most volunteers were involved in drop-in activities, or had volunteered for agencies which delivered services to asylum seekers. It was also pointed out that some volunteers do not have direct involvement in the networks, but participate indirectly through involvement in projects or activities being delivered by organisations represented in the networks.

Engagement with the wider communities appears to have been less successful. The idea behind many network activities has been to draw local people in to specific events and activities designed to promote interaction between asylum seeker and host communities. Most networks expressed a degree of disappointment over their inability to engage significant sections of host communities. Some possible reasons suggested for this were:

- Negative perceptions of asylum seekers circulating among some sections of the host communities.
- Networks have been unable to identify the key players in local communities.
- Competing interests and factional politics in some areas have made it difficult to engage local community activists.

Some networks, such as Gorbals, felt that they had achieved a degree of success in engaging key local activists in local events and activities. In Kingsway, the local community were being engaged through linking into other groups which feed back into the community, such as the Residents' Association. In Castlemilk, the local community was involved through the Tenants' Association and Community Forum. In North Glasgow, it was perceived that local activists would not engage with the network, but may be affiliated to groups represented in the network, and that community participation overall is therefore through involvement in other organisations and management committees that feed into networks.

## **Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

The degree to which the networks had managed to engage asylum seekers and refugees in integration activities was mixed. The drop-ins were reported as the most successful way of drawing in asylum seekers. Team sporting events were also described as a particularly successful way of getting communities to mix socially. Some networks had been successful in engaging asylum seekers, while others expressed disappointment over the low turnout at their organised local events. Most networks were interested in pursuing more activities which would engage asylum seekers, though it was acknowledged that it was difficult to facilitate such involvement. A number of barriers to this process were cited:

- Asylum seekers have been deterred by negative images in the media.
- Lack of childcare prevents attendance at some events.
- Language barriers have made communication difficult between different language groups. Lack of language clustering in the resettlement process has exacerbated this problem.
- Asylum seekers experience too many personal problems while waiting for status, to become involved in social events.
- Asylum seekers often prefer not to be visible in their local communities.
- Resources to facilitate and sustain involvement are insufficient. More support is needed for this process to occur. Information about new arrivals would facilitate outreach work.
- The nature of the asylum seeking population is transitory.
- High-rise housing is perceived as a barrier to social engagement.

### ***Involving asylum seekers and refugees in the networks***

Previous research has emphasised the importance of involving refugees and asylum seekers and RCOs in the provision of services for their communities (Audit Commission 2000; Ager *et al.* (2002). It is natural that in the longer term, the asylum

seeking and refugee community in Glasgow should become involved in the networks to a greater extent, and take partial ownership of, and responsibility for the mechanisms which provide services for their own communities.

Overall, refugees and asylum seekers were not represented in the networks to any significant extent, except in Kingsway, though some had been involved in volunteering at drop-ins in other areas. Barriers which applied to the more general engagement of asylum seekers in integration activities (see above) were also cited as reasons for lack of involvement in the networks. Additional reasons cited included the following:

- The set-up of the networks was not considered to be conducive to the participation of asylum seekers. In networks which were not direct service providers, it was difficult for current network members to envisage the inclusion of asylum seekers with a clear role at meetings.
- Interpreters would be required for network meetings.
- There was a widespread misconception among asylum seekers that it is illegal to volunteer, and that involvement in the networks might be perceived as such.

It is expected by service providers that as the new asylum seekers become more settled in Glasgow, RCOs will develop and they, along with individual refugees, will take a more active role in the networks. Most networks recognised the untapped potential of asylum seekers, and had noticed a general increase in their confidence as they became more established, but there was also a need expressed for more support to facilitate their involvement in the networks. Through the course of the research, some participants talked about the “Framework for Dialogue” project (being supported and delivered by the SRC, Community Work and Social Work Services, and funded by the Scottish Executive), which was in its early stages during the first round of focus groups. The aims of this ongoing project have been to support the process of integration at a local level through consultation with asylum seekers and refugees across language and cultural groups. This is to ensure their involvement in community structures which plan and deliver services for their own communities, and to respond to issues of local concern as they arise. There were, at the time of research, five pilot areas involved in the project: North Glasgow, Pollokshaws, Cranhill, Gorbals and Toryglen, and in 2004 the project will be extended to other networks. Some participants talked very positively about their experiences of the early stages of the project, which will potentially provide the necessary support to networks to involve refugees and asylum seekers in their future activities. In particular, the “Framework for Dialogue” has highlighted the need for cross-national co-operation within the asylum seeking community.

There are many potential advantages in involving asylum seekers and refugees in the networks. Given the time constraints and heavy workload of existing members, additional input could potentially increase the capacity of the networks, and would render them more responsive and accountable to the needs of the asylum seeking population. This process can also increase the confidence of individual asylum seekers and refugees as their lives become more established in Glasgow, while

volunteering can give them the chance to acquire more skills and enhance their future employment prospects.

Some participants expressed disappointment over the frequent loss of contact with asylum seekers after they had been granted refugee status. They felt that at this stage, refugees were in a better position to put something back into their communities, and participants would welcome their input to the networks. They felt that there should be more focus on remaining in contact with asylum seekers through the transition phase. There was also a feeling that this loss of contact was caused by refugees leaving to live elsewhere, though it was not possible to gauge the extent to which this had occurred, and whether they may have moved to other parts of the city or left Glasgow altogether. It was felt that more contact and support at the point of decision (when asylum seekers receive a positive decision) would be beneficial in promoting longer term involvement in the networks by refugees.

## **Communication Between Networks**

Some networks had co-operated with each other on a limited basis to exchange feedback on a variety of activities. This was regarded as a very beneficial process. Sometimes communication between the drop-ins was facilitated through pre-existing church networks. Most networks were keen to engage in more of this type of exchange, but were limited by time constraints. Some participants requested more information about the location of other drop-ins to facilitate exchange visits and information sharing.

## **The Community Responses Co-ordinating Group (CRCG)**

An important dimension of the work of the networks has been the ability to come together and act on issues of common concern. The CRCG provides a forum for this activity, bringing together representatives from each of the integration networks across the city. The SRC and GCVS have a major role in this forum, and it is also attended and supported by representatives from Glasgow City Council. The Council offers support in the form of administration and a venue for meetings, which are held once monthly in the City Chambers. The CRCG has increasing access to and support from the Council at a senior decision making level, allowing some concerns to be passed upwards to the Council. The meetings also provide a forum for collective lobbying. The development of the CRCG and the involvement of the networks in that forum has been a key component of efforts from the SRC and GCVS to facilitate a co-ordinated response to issues affecting asylum seekers in a coherent way city-wide.

Discussions about the CRCG and its role both in the focus groups and later feedback sessions highlighted that while CRCG meetings were generally well-supported, the mechanisms required to make this process work effectively for the networks required some attention both at CRCG and at network level. A number of concerns were raised by participants in some networks. Primarily these were related to a general lack of awareness regarding the role of the CRCG, and of the

potential benefits from participation in this forum. In some cases, this could be attributed to the way information is communicated within the networks themselves. More in-depth investigation often revealed that communication related to CRCG business had been working effectively, but that it had not been made clear to all network members that some issues which were under discussion were being fed down from the CRCG. A general reluctance in some networks to attend CRCG meetings was attributed to severe time constraints within which the networks have been working, and conflicting demands on their time.

As most of the networks are now at a point where they are beginning to engage in strategic planning for the future, this would be an opportune time for the CRCG to attempt to engage the networks more effectively and make them fully aware of the benefits of participation in this forum. Given the already heavy administrative burden on the networks and the competing demands on their time, there is a need to make the role of the CRCG more explicit, and the potential benefits of participation clearer. Responses suggested that more effective streamlining of information and more administrative assistance in the dissemination of information about CRCG business would help this process. The CRCG is potentially a very effective mechanism through which the networks can lobby other agencies collectively and effect change. To function effectively, it needs the networks to take ownership of the forum through full and active participation.

## **Current Progress and Future Developments**

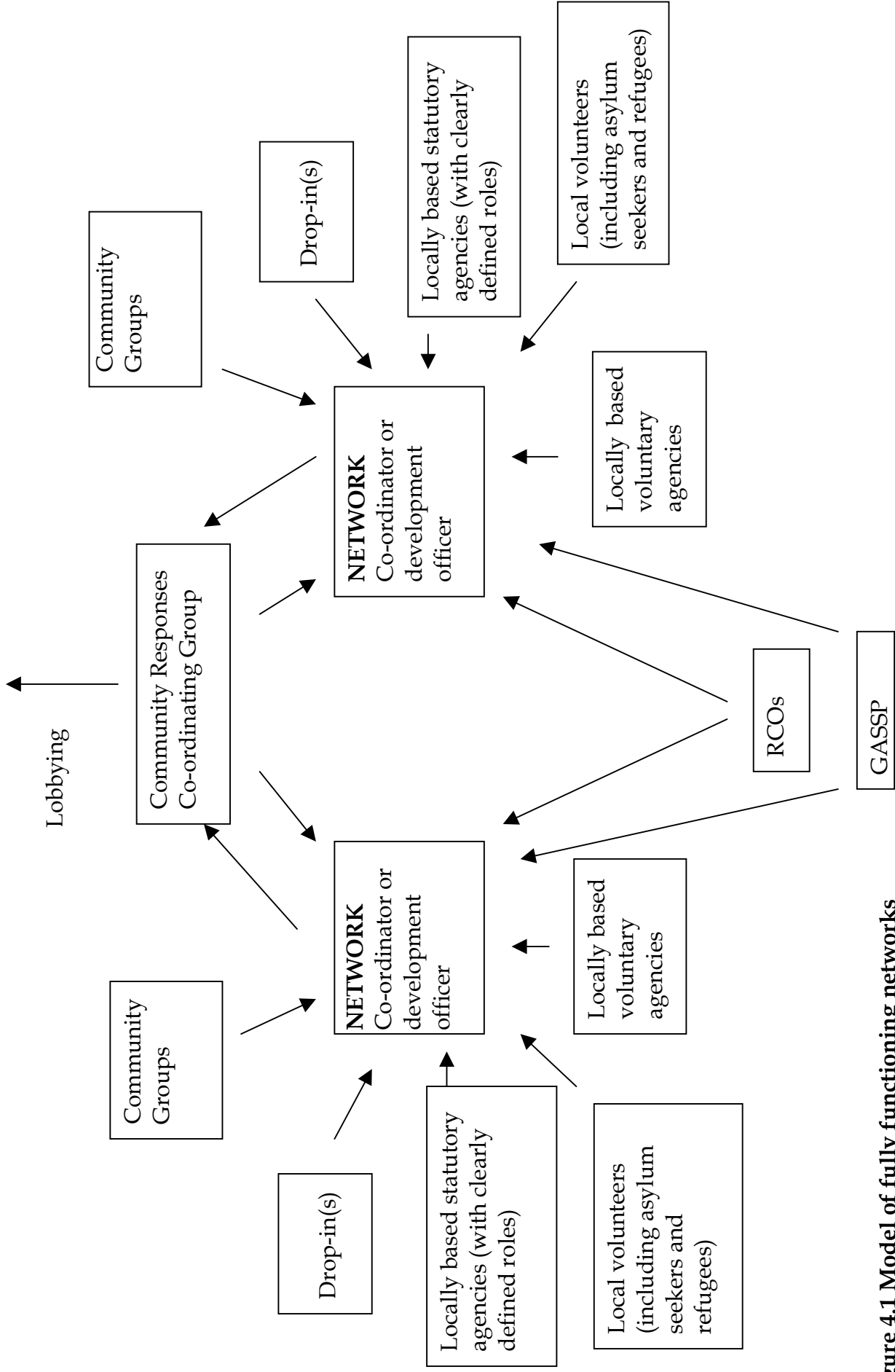
The rapid pace of resettlement has created demands on all sectors involved with responding to the needs of asylum seekers, and relevant agencies have not always been fully prepared to meet these needs. During the initial three years of the dispersal programme, the process of co-ordinating and responding to the needs of asylum seekers has been highly reactive with little time for coherent strategic planning. The voluntary sector has been in the front-line of this response by nature of its activities and has been highly responsive to changing needs within the city. The response of statutory agencies has been mixed and, within the framework of this research, it has not been possible to evaluate the overall role of statutory agencies, as not all agencies have been engaged with the networks. However, the role of primary health care and education services was viewed positively by research participants, and in particular, the role of health visitors was praised. Key statutory agencies are now in the process of incorporating the changing needs of asylum seekers into their service provision and increasing their engagement with some of the networks. In this respect, GASSP has shown more willingness to engage with the networks in the later stages of this research. It is expected that, in time, the process of “mainstreaming” will ensure that the needs of asylum seekers are met through incorporating their needs into mainstream service provision. It is also expected that the needs of asylum seekers more generally will become incorporated into wider community planning structures.

The involvement of asylum seekers in the networks is also a key component under development through the “Framework for Dialogue”. This process has required facilitation due to the difficulty in establishing RCOs as a forum for representation

under the conditions of dispersal. In time, given that these developments are successfully implemented, and that a new contract is negotiated for the reception of more asylum seekers in Glasgow, a fully functioning and supported network might contain the following active membership (Figure 4.1):

- A possible co-ordinator
- Representatives from local SIPs (or whatever replaces them)
- Representatives from a full range of statutory agencies working with asylum seekers locally, each with clearly agreed roles and responsibilities
- Representatives from local voluntary agencies
- Representatives from local community groups
- Volunteers
- Drop-in workers, possibly engaging in new and diversified roles
- Representatives from RCOs or from refugee communities

To enable active lobbying on key issues of concern (such as destitution) affecting asylum seekers across the city, the networks could then ideally be linked up more effectively city-wide through the forum of the CRCG. This would require the CRCG to be recognised as an appropriate mechanism for this purpose, and for the networks to actively take ownership of the CRCG and make it work for them.



**Figure 4.1 Model of fully functioning networks**

## 5. Perceptions of Policy

Overall, the general consensus across the networks was that the provision of services for asylum seekers through the networks had been delivered on an *ad hoc* and reactive basis, in response to immediate and urgent need, rather than through carefully considered strategic planning. The networks were not in place for the arrival of the earliest asylum seekers, and local voluntary and community groups had little or no appropriate training to work with asylum seekers, as the following typical quotes demonstrate:

“If it was a group within your own community, I think everyone would just muck in. It’s not just because they’re asylum seekers. There’s a need there and everybody just got together and it was a case of, ‘right, get on with this, right how do we do it?’ And if you’re being honest, we’re all just self-taught as we go along. We started off blind. We might have jumped in two feet first at the beginning but you’re finding your feet now. It might be two years down the line.”

“As the issues raised themselves, it was a case of, ‘who in this room can do that?’”

“Until we started, everybody who did voluntary, it’s just the case that you went in and did it. For some reason this is different and you need knowledge.”

The implementation of dispersal and lack of communication from NASS regarding the arrival of asylum seekers during the early stages has contributed to this perception. At the beginning of the dispersal programme, it was reported that asylum seekers often arrived during the night with no prior warning, leaving no time for community preparation or time to put basic support services in place:

“That was the problem. There was nothing in place and then all of a sudden all the people were in their houses. And they’ve got nothing. Although we talked about it and we thought we were ahead of the game, really, there was nothing in place. When the first family arrived we said, ‘yes, we need a couch, we need bedding, we’ve got it here’. People were willing to give stuff.”

“Away at the very beginning when they started this dispersal, that’s where the Home Office and NASS were all wrong. They did it all under the cover of darkness, and if you’re doing anything that way then you’re hiding something, and that’s when the problems started. If they’d brought the people in the open and never hidden anything, then I think the community might have been able to accept them faster.”

A very clear need was expressed for more accountability from NASS, to enable greater co-operation between the agencies providing support for asylum seekers. In



general, there was a strong feeling that the networks and asylum seekers had been let down by some mainstream statutory agencies, and by Glasgow City Council for failing to prepare the ground adequately. There appeared to be some confusion over the respective roles played by statutory agencies and community and voluntary groups, and it was clear that some volunteers had not anticipated the prominent role they would be playing in responding to the needs of asylum seekers. Most had envisaged a role in *supporting* statutory service provision at the outset, rather than being the main providers of some services.

At the time of this research, the rate of new arrivals was slowing down and the networks were in a position to reflect over their achievements so far. This period of consolidation was allowing the networks to move away from reactive work towards a more planned approach. Participants had observed the changing needs of the maturing asylum seeking population, and were actively reassessing their service provision generally, and in particular, the role of the drop-ins, with the possibility of diversifying and adapting the support roles that the drop-ins could offer.

Overall, the networks have had to adapt very quickly to the emerging needs of asylum seekers as they have arisen, and this has been a very rapid learning process for all concerned. The networks identified key issues arising from the enormity of the task they had taken on and the lack of resources to carry it out:

- The front-line work of responding to very urgent and immediate need was often accredited to key individuals working within voluntary and statutory agencies and to the efforts of volunteers. In this respect, some networks were found to be largely supported by a very small number of highly motivated individuals.
- Individual networks were often driven by bottom-up initiatives. This has rendered their work highly appropriate and responsive to local needs. In many respects, this can be considered a strength, but it also renders the networks very fragile and vulnerable to the departure of key individuals.
- The networks were generally reliant on people who were *very* busy, creating a danger of “burn-out” among key individuals.

### **Perceptions of the UK Immigration and Asylum Policy Framework**

There was an overwhelming perception among the networks that UK immigration and asylum policy represented a barrier to their work. Many participants expressed their frustration with a system which they have experienced as disjointed and inconsistent. The current system was perceived to be excessively punitive and to work *against* integration. While service providers in the networks have been striving to promote integration, they feel that they have been dealing with a legislative and policy framework which has primarily been a policy of deterrence, and one which the networks felt mitigated *against* integration:

“I think the greatest need of asylum seekers is to have a sympathetic government. We honestly don't have a sympathetic government, and it's pathetic how much is left to local agencies. We can work for and support integration, but why is it left to us to explain to local people what an asylum seeker is, that they have rights, and that they have come here for specific reasons? Our government spends billions on publicising the rights of people and the welfare of our citizens. They're conspicuously silent when it comes to publicising what an asylum seeker is.”

Although the Scottish Executive has devolved responsibility for integration and social inclusion/cohesion, network members felt that the fact that asylum and immigration is not a devolved matter constituted a fundamental problem for the work they do. While they are funded to carry out integration work with asylum seekers living in local communities, there are very significant barriers to the extent to which asylum seekers can participate in Scottish society when they cannot work, their income is less than the minimum level of income support, and they are not able to access housing and education on the same basis as other local residents. This situation is intensified by very negative coverage of the asylum issue. Participants were frustrated by the inconsistencies inherent in this framework.

Issues were raised in relation to perceived tensions and apparent contradictions between the roles of Westminster and the Scottish Executive. These tensions were reflected in what was experienced by the networks as apparently disjointed relationships between various bodies responsible for service delivery. NASS, which is responsible for the implementation of dispersal and provision of accommodation for asylum seekers, operates from the Home Office and works in a highly centralised way, and it has proved difficult for service providers in the networks to establish contact with them when necessary. The contract between NASS and Glasgow City Council ties the Council into a set of obligations defined by NASS (and therefore by the Home Office and Westminster), while other integration activities are defined and funded by the Scottish Executive. This makes it difficult for Glasgow City Council to respond to problems experienced by service providers, while maintaining the terms of their contract with NASS. Tensions around this set of relationships have been experienced by service providers within the networks. In many respects, the implementation of dispersal in Glasgow is characterised by a perceived lack of “joined up” thinking and logic. This lack of logic was explained by one participant, expressing views which others shared:

“They're [NASS] coming from down south. It's a different culture down there. It's not Scottish people that's doing it. That's the difference. It's coming from the Home Office, but they've been brought up and they're based in Glasgow now. It's still a cultural situation. It's the Rule Britannia mentality.”

“This is south of England politics.”

Participants questioned the ability to effect positive changes in Glasgow under the current structure, and the networks felt that they had no ability to influence policy decisions taken in Westminster, though they did have some very limited input

through their local MPs. A key problem identified was the recent decision (in 2002) to revoke the right for asylum seekers to work. Participants explained that it was very difficult for asylum seekers to participate in Scottish society without being able to work, and that, in combination with the long waiting time, this has created a new set of problems. Inactivity was perceived very negatively, creating unnecessary dependency, and reducing confidence:

“If somebody two years down the line is still an asylum seeker, they can’t integrate. They are an asylum seeker that lives in a flat run by NASS. They’ll get somebody from the Support Team [GASSP] visiting them every month. Their children are in school, but they could at any point be removed. The whole idea of integration I think is dependent on improving the waiting time, or allowing people to work while they are waiting for their decision to be made. As it is at the moment, you’re making people dependent on a system they don’t want to be dependent on. By the time they get their status, they’ve lost their skills and confidence.”

For these reasons, some participants stressed that it was essential to reinstate the right for asylum seekers to work during the waiting period.

#### *‘Failed’ asylum seekers*

A further key example of this perceived lack of coherence highlighted by the participants was the ongoing evictions of ‘failed’ asylum seekers from NASS accommodation by Glasgow City Council. The Council was, for the first time, being contractually forced to evict a significant number of ‘failed’ asylum seekers from properties under contract to NASS. Legally, asylum seekers who receive a negative decision can have support and accommodation withdrawn after 21 days. Glasgow City Council is legally bound by its contractual obligations to NASS to carry out the evictions, though there are no measures in place to deal with the plight of the evictees. Some ‘failed’ asylum seekers are not able to return home, as in some cases, no safe route exists, or their governments may refuse to take them back. This lack of integrated policy mechanisms leaves some asylum seekers with no legal right to remain in the country, no legal means of supporting themselves, no accommodation, but with no means to return to their country of origin. This is exacerbated by a policy framework which does not allow local authorities and homeless charities to help destitute asylum seekers.

Drop-in volunteers did not feel that they had the capacity to deal with this situation and were concerned that they may be put in a difficult situation legally if destitute asylum seekers turned up at the drop-ins. Reports of destitution among asylum seekers in other parts of the country were already appearing in the press and were causing concern in Glasgow. Front-line workers appeared genuinely scared of the potential for destitution among ‘failed’ asylum seekers, and the impacts that the situation would have on service provision in the city. There was a perception among the participants that many of these asylum seekers had been failed by the UK immigration and asylum system, and that the city of Glasgow was about to be left with a destitution problem which could be avoided if policy measures were more integrated. There was also a strong perception that destitution

among asylum seekers could potentially undermine efforts to tackle social exclusion and homelessness in Scotland, and damage race relations. The networks expected that this issue was about to become a priority for them if it could not be resolved at a higher level.

A number of concerns were expressed over the wider impacts of this process:

- Other asylum seekers in accommodation contracted to NASS may put up 'failed' asylum seekers, and by doing so, breach their own contracts and risk eviction themselves.
- 'Failed' asylum seekers may disappear into the informal economy, exposing themselves to exploitation and potentially dangerous working conditions. This could also allow employers to undercut minimum wage levels, affecting other workers.
- A visible destitution problem may generate negative media publicity, particularly if asylum seekers engage in survival behaviour such as begging or stealing. This could potentially fuel a racist backlash and damage race relations in Scotland.

### *Detention*

The detention of asylum seekers and their children at Dungavel also raised concern among the participants. Many had had direct experience of asylum seekers they had been in contact with being detained at short notice. They observed that this caused considerable unease among the asylum seeking population generally. Network members expressed anxiety over the way asylum seekers were being detained and said that they would welcome clarification of the criteria for detention. Through their activities in the drop-ins, the churches in Glasgow have been at the forefront of lobbying to end the detention of asylum seeker children in Dungavel.

### *A role for the Scottish Executive?*

The above issues raised concerns that there should be more control over immigration and asylum in Scotland, as the context of immigration was different from elsewhere in the UK. While it was acknowledged that there were valid reasons why immigration and asylum policy should remain under the jurisdiction of Westminster, there were some areas within which participants felt it would be useful for the Scottish Executive to have some devolved responsibility:

- Jurisdiction over the rules relating to entitlement to benefits, in particular, the application of section 55, which was seen to be causing unnecessary hardship to asylum seekers
- Jurisdiction over the right to work while claiming asylum
- The ability to intervene in cases of eviction and destitution, particularly where asylum seekers were refused refugee status but could not return home
- The detention of asylum seekers and their children

Section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998 would provide a legal basis for some aspects of immigration and asylum to be devolved. Feelings about the right to work were particularly strong, and participants stressed that the recent revocation of this right made their work very difficult, as integration was effectively being put on hold until refugee status or the right to remain was granted. This appears counterproductive in the wider context of skills shortages in Scotland, as skills and valuable time are often lost during the waiting period. Forcing asylum seekers to live on benefits can also potentially fuel negative images portrayed by the media.

## **Perceptions of Integration and Service Provision**

The way that service provision for asylum seekers has been conceptualised has been framed within the Scottish Executive's "equalities" perspective, where services for excluded groups such as asylum seekers are integrated into mainstream services. This approach to service delivery was strongly supported by the participants, who were already working in localities suffering from multiple deprivation, which had suffered successive cutbacks in services and community facilities. This perception of neglect of local needs has meant that the requirements of new asylum seekers have been competing with a range of other acute needs associated with poverty and social exclusion. Participants frequently pointed out the many competing problems in dispersal areas, and most felt that any form of specialist services for asylum seekers and refugees could potentially generate hostility among local communities and therefore work against their community development efforts.

Most definitions of 'integration' given by focus group members demonstrated an expectation that refugees will adapt and use services on the same basis as the host population:

"The idea is that drop-ins provide the first contact with the host community, but the idea is that eventually, the drop-ins will only serve as a social function, but a lot of their other support will come by being integrated."

"They're not always going to have that support there so you're looking at integrating into mainstream services so that they know for the future what they're going to do. How to use a GP, how to use a dentist....."

Some participants felt that the ultimate aim of the networks must be to abolish themselves, and that asylum seekers and their needs should therefore be integral to the work of the local SIPs (and whatever succeeds them) where appropriate, and integrated into community planning structures. Almost all participants expressed the view that services should remain integrated from the outset, as these typical extracts demonstrate:

"I think it's important to point out that we don't differentiate between asylum seekers and anyone else in the community. And that's the principle all the organisations work on here. We don't separate people at all. They all live in one area in xxx. The Gxx postcode is what it's all about. We're all Gxx

postcode and we have the common aim of seeing things improve in this area.”

“We don’t do anything just for asylum seekers. Everything is mixed.”

“You can’t be seen to be making preferential treatment available to asylum seekers.”

“The drop-in for the asylum seekers has been within the church, and the local community access it as well. So it’s a case of, the doors are just open. Asylum seekers are a priority but the community use it as well. Anything that they’re basically doing, apart from ESOL [English classes], nobody in the community would be turned away from being involved in, whether they had it running for the asylum seekers, they would still be allowed in. Even the drop-in. The community can come in and ask to get forms filled in.”

Nearly all participants, when initially questioned, favoured this approach as the most effective way of promoting integration. When questioned in more detail however, most agreed that asylum seekers have specific needs in the early stages of their resettlement, which require specialist support services. They acknowledged that there are issues which differentiate asylum seekers from members of the host communities, and it was felt that mainstream services in the Glasgow area are not yet effective in understanding those needs adequately:

“Services that have already been there for years have been very well established for the indigenous population, and now they’re trying to slot people from other countries and cultures into these services and sometimes it’s just not appropriate. I think that needs looking at a higher level. Not all the services that are there are appropriate, so we might just have to try and manage our best with what we’ve got.”

The specialist services cited unanimously as necessary by all networks were drop-ins and English language classes, both of which were seen as essential to remove the barriers to longer term integration. Other specific services mentioned by some networks were: services which were culturally sensitive to women, interpreting services and trauma counselling. Participants also raised the need to consider the ways in which the arrival of asylum seekers may impact pre-existing service provision, and highlighted the importance of addressing additional needs adequately. Childcare was raised as a particular area of concern, due to the age profile of the asylum seeking population, where the extra numbers of pre-school children among the asylum seeking community had made comprehensive access to nursery provision for the whole community impossible in some areas. Participants asserted that mainstream service providers need to be more responsive to these additional needs and to ensure that there is adequate provision for *all* people.

### ***Bilingual units in schools***

One area which prompted lengthy discussion among participants was the provision of specialist bilingual units in schools. Castlemilk and Drumchapel High

Schools both have these services, and the schools were highly praised for their input. In Castlemilk this service has been very effective, however, the unit in Drumchapel has created major problems in the Kingsway area, as the unit was placed in an area where there are very few asylum seekers. Children have been bussed from the areas covered by the Kingsway network to Drumchapel. Free transport provision for asylum seekers had created tensions as it was perceived by some residents as preferential treatment, particularly by those whose own children attended Drumchapel High and had to pay for their own transport. Participants in Kingsway also felt that the situation created a barrier to integrating communities when young asylum seekers were not mixing socially with local children. These problems were further compounded at the point of decision when refugee families no longer received free transport to schools outwith their local catchment area, and effectively were no longer able to attend Drumchapel High. This had caused disappointment and unnecessary disruption to children's education in numerous cases.

### **Issues Arising at the Point of Decision**

Concerns were raised during the research that there appeared to be significant numbers of refugees leaving Glasgow, specifically at the point of decision. Although this trend was largely based on anecdotal evidence, it was also being reported by professionals who had links with RCOs in Glasgow. Participants expressed disappointment that precisely at the point when refugees were potentially in a position to contribute positively to their communities, they appeared to be leaving. They also expressed disappointment that valuable community development work had been lost, along with the potential rejuvenation of local schools. Not much is known about refugees once they leave the system of NASS support, due to lack of cohesion in the way that the transition period is managed, so this trend is speculative and requires more research.

It is natural that there should be significant secondary migration to join family, friends and similar ethnic communities in other parts of Britain, given that the dispersal policy did not take account of family ties or facilitate the clustering of similar ethnic groups. However, it is also disappointing for the networks that it appears to be happening on such a significant scale. The networks found it difficult to engage in integration work with a constantly shifting population, where people were moving at short notice at the point of decision. There were also anecdotal reports of refugees from other parts of Britain opting to join relatives in Glasgow at the point of decision, albeit in less significant numbers than those who were leaving. Some refugees who had initially left Glasgow and later attempted to return were reported to be experiencing difficulties in accessing appropriate housing. Clearly this is an area which merits further research, as the true extent of departures from Glasgow is unknown, as are the motivations behind it.

Participants expressed concern that more could be done to encourage refugees to remain in Glasgow. The established procedure for informing asylum seekers of their options at the point of decision is for the Resettlement Team (part of Glasgow City Council's Social Work services) to contact them and clarify their options in

relation to housing and benefits. However, the experience of many participants was that the Resettlement Team had not been managing the transition effectively across the city, mainly due to a large backlog of cases and inadequate staffing levels. There were also reports that the Resettlement Team were not helping with claims for backdated benefits (this can amount to significant sums of money in some cases). In North Glasgow for example, it was reported that the Resettlement Team were relying on the drop-ins to provide point of decision information. Overall, across the networks, there appeared to be a lack of cohesion in the management of the point of decision period:

“But then again, that’s where there’s a missing link somewhere. The Resettlement Team should have been out.....There’s a lack of communication from one area to the next area. Obviously there’s a missing link somewhere.”

Major problems were being experienced in relation to the very short time period within which refugees have to make decisions about their future. Effective information at this stage is therefore crucial to facilitate an informed decision. It was generally felt that the short decision time has been effectively forcing many refugees to stay in NASS accommodation as the only practical option, leaving them in a poverty trap where it is difficult to cover housing costs (NASS accommodation is furnished and therefore more expensive than unfurnished accommodation). Others appear to have been leaving Glasgow for other parts of Britain where they may have been able to rely on support from relatives and friends. These accounts are consistent with research findings from other areas of Britain, where the 28-day point of decision transition period appears to be “unworkable” (Carter and El-Hassan 2003).

Although no specific factors were identified which might be associated with the decisions to leave Glasgow, discussions at a CRCG meeting (prompted by a presentation of preliminary findings of this research) pinpointed some possible explanations which would merit further investigation:

- Racial harassment and lack of community safety
- Difficulty in obtaining appropriate housing in areas deemed to be safe
- Barriers to employment and retraining
- Lack of appropriate employment opportunities

This prompted further discussions about how these issues could be addressed. The group present at the meeting outlined the following possible measures:

- Extra transition support to complement the services carried out by the Resettlement Team. This could potentially be carried out by the networks in the form of an information package, or more informally through the drop-ins.
- A drop-in surgery offering advice and help for people who want to leave Glasgow.
- A website with comparable information by region about various issues affecting refugees. This might include information about racial



harassment, housing opportunities, BME employment statistics and schooling.

- Measures within the housing sector, such as a system of cash advances for deposits, to facilitate access to the private rented sector.
- Encouragement to the private sector to involve them in housing provision for refugees.
- Move-on initiatives involving local businesses.
- More joined-up working between NASS and other agencies.

Although some networks supported the development of initiatives to ease the point of decision transition and to provide more information at this difficult time, other networks felt that it was not their role to engage in this type of provision and felt that it should remain external to the networks. For this reason, to maintain a consistent service across the city, it may be more effective in the longer term for measures such as those outlined above to be tackled at a city-wide level by statutory agencies with a specific remit to do so.

## 6. Network Support Needs

Within the short time that asylum seekers have been in Glasgow, a huge amount has been achieved by the networks with limited resources. However, this has been a highly demanding and stressful process for those involved. If networks are to be the way forward for the co-ordination of locally based services for asylum seekers in Glasgow, and if services are to be of a standard which can cater for the increasingly complex needs of a maturing asylum seeking population, then they clearly need more support if they are to continue and develop their work in a sustainable way. The networks are still fragile and are operating under very significant resource constraints. To continue on the present basis could potentially undermine the development and integration of good quality services for asylum seekers in the city. Although each network identified specific support needs, there were needs which were common to nearly all networks.

### Common Support Needs

#### *Funding*

The Scottish Executive provides core funding to the networks to carry out their work, but they also bid for funding from other sources on a competitive basis to carry out specific pieces of work. While some networks reported that they had managed to secure significant funding, others had run out of funding to maintain basic services such as English language teaching. Funding was perceived as a continual problem for some networks, particularly those not supported through a local SIP. All networks perceived a need for further funding to initiate new projects. The networks had many innovative plans to develop new activities and services, but often experienced conflicting demands on their time between operating existing services, and finding new sources of funding. Participants found it difficult to engage in the longer term planning necessary to sustain projects, without secure funding. Some networks expressed an interest in attending training for applying for funding, to raise their effectiveness in this area. More effective and targeted fundraising could potentially free up time for other activities. There was a general dislike among participants for the competitive nature of funding provision, with most preferring to work in a more co-operative way across the city.

#### *Time/general capacity/facilitation support*

Time constraints were perceived as an ongoing problem, and conflicting demands on people's time often resulted in prioritising some aspects of the networks' activities over others. Many of the agencies involved in the networks have had other demands on their time in addition to working with asylum seekers. Reliance on small numbers of volunteers and professionals has left the networks vulnerable to the departure of key individuals, while long working hours for some individuals has increased the potential for "burn-out", a situation which renders the current situation unsustainable in the longer term. The time and capacity constraints the networks have faced has created a need for support to facilitate progress on a

variety of projects. Holding things together and chasing up elements of work in progress is a key support need in all networks to keep momentum going.

### ***Engagement from statutory agencies***

While most networks had adequate numbers of volunteers, it was generally felt that there was an over-reliance on volunteers, and that more engagement from specific statutory agencies would free up time for volunteers to work on other issues. It was also felt that there should be more clarity over the relative roles of the statutory and voluntary sectors in various policy areas. Specifically, most networks expressed the need for GASSP to carry out its remit more effectively, while appropriate support from the Resettlement Team at the point of decision was also seen to be lacking.

### ***Premises***

While most networks had adequate facilities from which to organise drop-ins, meetings and social events, lack of suitable premises was a problem in some networks. The drop-ins were usually in church premises, but venues were sometimes a problem for specific one-off events. Lack of an appropriate base was also cited as a barrier to the appointment of network co-ordinators in some networks.

### ***Administration***

Administration is essential for the networks to function effectively, but it also represents a huge workload. In some networks, administrative work was carried out by statutory agencies or project workers, but for others it represented a significant burden which prevented volunteers from engaging in other activities. Administration was also one of the barriers cited to effective participation in the CRCG, as the distribution of minutes and information about meetings added to the existing administrative load.

### ***Support to facilitate the involvement of asylum seekers***

Networks expressed disappointment over the extent to which they had managed to engage asylum seekers in some areas. An outreach service to all new arrivals was carried out by health visitors in Govan, and other networks wished to implement a similar service but were unable to do so as they were not provided with the relevant information about new arrivals in their areas. It was felt that NASS and GASSP could do more to facilitate outreach work by engaging in more joined up working with the networks. Toryglen drop-in had managed to do some outreach work and felt that this process had been very successful.

### ***The establishment of clear lines of accountability***

Establishing clear lines of responsibility is essential for the success of any partnership. However, major problems emerged in relation to ultimate responsibility for asylum seekers where they had been failed by agencies such as NASS. Front-line voluntary workers (particularly at drop-ins) were not always clear regarding the degree to which statutory agencies were responsible for specific

## *SCRSJ*

issues. As dispersal has created a range of new issues for statutory agencies in Glasgow to address, clear responsibility around a number of issues had not yet been established, generally leaving the voluntary sector to pick up the pieces. There was some confusion around several issues concerned with responsibility and roles. These included: destitution; responsibility for asylum seekers who had not received money orders from NASS; protection of asylum seekers from racist abuse in their own homes; and, the provision of appropriate guidance at the point of decision.

## **Specific Network Support Needs**

In addition to these general support needs, more specific support needs were identified by individual networks:

### *Cranhill*

- Support to deliver advocacy services
- Continued funding for English language classes

### *Toryglen*

- More engagement from the health service as an earlier link has been lost

### *Gorbals*

- Resources to set up a befriending service
- Resources to develop a formal advocacy service through the Gorbals Initiative

### *Kingsway*

- Funding and resources to set up longer term structures for joint working across the west of the city. The short-term nature of funding is a barrier to this process.
- Funding to develop more comprehensive drop-in provision, as some areas are not yet covered.
- Anti-racist training specifically for young people.
- Additional support for English language teaching. The network is working towards developing more classes in everyday conversation. It has been over-reliant on volunteers and is in need of more formalised arrangements.
- More support to protect asylum seekers from racial harassment.

### *Castlemilk*

- Better access to interpreting services, as the network is currently using local expertise

### *North Glasgow*

- Funding for a development post to facilitate joining up different areas of work and reducing the burden on existing members. The network would like a voluntary project to act as the host organisation for this post.

### *Maryhill*

- GCVS and social work support from this network are to be withdrawn due to staffing changes. This input needs to be replaced from other sources.
- Support with administration.

### *Pollokshaws*

- There is a need for a better picture of what work is being carried out with asylum seekers by local mainstream services that are not engaged with the network. So far, there has been a lack of time/resources to gather this information. A lead person is required to provide this overview and facilitate the involvement of mainstream statutory agencies in the network.
- GCVS and Social Work support for this network are to be withdrawn due to staffing changes. This input needs to be replaced from other sources.
- Support for development work with women and families.

## **Meeting Support Needs**

There was much discussion over possible ways of meeting these support needs during the focus groups and feedback sessions. It is difficult to identify mechanisms to improve support given the fragmented nature of networks in the city, each of which need some form of specialist input as and when required, and not necessarily on an ongoing basis. The structures of the individual networks are also important in determining their potential support needs.

The key support need identified by all networks was for more engagement from agencies working with asylum seekers. Most stressed that they needed more formalised agreements with these agencies and clearer lines of responsibility for statutory agencies in particular. Over time, the needs of asylum seekers will inevitably become more integrated into mainstream provision. The general feeling was that such agreements should build on services already there, but by establishing clearly defined mechanisms for their delivery, there would be clear lines of accountability for these services. Most participants agreed that this process would increase the capacity of the networks very significantly, freeing up time for volunteers and community groups to engage in other work.

Some networks, which perceived co-ordination and strategic planning as a major support need, preferred the option of appointing an additional co-ordinator from their funds (some networks already had co-ordinators or project workers). Others

felt that this was not the best use of resources and expressed a preference for increasing capacity through expanding collective responsibilities within their networks, and extending work already being carried out by existing members. There was considerable debate around this issue, and some of the key points are outlined in the following section.

*Advantages seen in appointing a co-ordinator*

- A co-ordinator could have overall responsibility for strategic planning.
- A co-ordinator would provide someone to pull things together and sustain momentum between meetings.
- A co-ordinator with a clear remit could take on a workload which other members do not have time to deal with.
- A co-ordinator could reduce the administrative burden.
- Specific issues could be pursued more vigorously without impacting on other work.

Consensus within Pollokshaws, Maryhill, Castlemilk, North Glasgow and Toryglen networks favoured the creation of a specialist co-ordinator post. The networks in favour of appointing a co-ordinator highlighted their proposals:

- Pollokshaws network proposed that to counteract over-reliance on an appointed co-ordinator in their network, this person should implement an action plan devised by the network collectively, thus ensuring the continued support and involvement of the whole network.
- Toryglen network had a clear idea that the role of its potential co-ordinator should be to ensure momentum in the work of the network. The post should be appointed by the network to ensure that the network members could retain ownership of its activities, while administration should be carried out by other organisations within the network.
- North Glasgow network considered that a development post would be a useful addition to facilitate joining up the different areas of work carried out by the network, thus reducing the burden on existing members. A post would also need to be focused on development work which could facilitate the expansion of the network and maximise its contribution. It was hoped that a voluntary project would act as the host organisation for the post. The network were keen that this post should have a very local focus and not be pulled in different directions.
- Castlemilk network favoured an advice and support role for a potential co-ordinator, and someone to shoulder the burden and drive work forward, though they felt it was perhaps too late now, given that there would be few new asylum seekers coming into the area due to the planned demolition of the flats where asylum seekers have been housed.
- Maryhill network believed that a potential leadership role was not the key issue. There was considerable debate around the issue as the network considered itself to be strong, with ownership embedded within the group. However, they agreed that a co-ordinator could potentially unlock the untapped capacity within the group as well as taking on a co-ordination and administration role. Initiating funding

applications would also be a key role. At the time of research, the network had no office base for a co-ordinator.

Suggestions were made by some participants that the appointment of a full-time city-wide co-ordinator to work across the integration networks on a long-term basis may be the best way forward. They argued that this could potentially reduce the workloads for individual networks and consolidate knowledge and expertise across the networks, but avoid the problems associated with the potential short-term nature of individual posts. This person could be in a strategic position to acquire an overview of the issues, and co-ordinate strategies across the city more effectively. However, most networks were in favour of maintaining more local ownership over the ways their networks operated, and some considered the potential advantages of a modified version of this model, with a network development officer working part time in two or more networks. This would have some of the inherent advantages described above, but would also allow networks to maintain local ownership.

#### *Disadvantages seen in appointing a co-ordinator*

- Over-reliance on a co-ordinator may reduce participation and ownership from other network members and could impact negatively on overall capacity.
- A post would be expensive to fund and would constitute a less effective option than additional resources to support work already under way.
- This option may be a waste of resources given the short-term nature of a funded post, and the time needed to become established.
- In some networks, a work base would need to be found to host the position.
- A perception that it was too late to be appointing a co-ordinator as the numbers of new arrivals was starting to decline.

Kingsway, Cranhill, Pollok and Gorbals networks were not in favour of appointing a co-ordinator as some of these networks already had a person acting as a development worker, and therefore preferred other means of building capacity.

- Pollok network expressed a preference for the allocation of additional financial resources to network members who carry out day-to-day work, and the channelling of resources into local groups and communities. In this respect, a co-ordinator post would be a drain on the resources available.
- Cranhill network did not favour the appointment of a co-ordinator, but expressed a need for more input across the board from statutory agencies and the local community. They favoured greater centralisation at city level of resources such as training and funding, potentially freeing up network time to deliver other appropriate services locally.
- Kingsway network identified a strong need to strengthen community groups and local structures in order to build the capacity of the network. They preferred more support for existing work carried out by the network.

## Training Needs

Training needs were perceived as a key component of the support needs identified by the networks. Participants highlighted that their training needs had evolved as the asylum seeking population had become more established, a process which has created new and changing demands on service providers and volunteers. They stressed that training needs therefore require to be reviewed regularly.

While it was acknowledged that there were effective training opportunities available through the SRC, GARA (Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance), Barnardo's and other organisations, time constraints did not allow these opportunities to be fully utilised. Some groups were happy with information about training opportunities available, while others expressed a wish for more information about what was on offer and how to access it. Further, while the training offered by the SRC was highly praised by many participants, there was a perception that some of the other training on offer was often not sufficiently rooted in local contexts. A need was expressed for anti-racism training which can help people to address problems specific to asylum seekers in their own areas. It was pointed out that general anti-racism training needs to have other dimensions added to it, as dealing with asylum seekers involves an extra set of issues, including jealousy over resources and perceptions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' asylum seekers, which create greater potential for harassment problems. The participants also felt that statutory service providers require training to understand the pressures asylum seekers are under and how this can impact on the attitudes and behaviour of this vulnerable client group when accessing services. Other training needs identified included:

- Basic advocacy
- Protecting personal boundaries when dealing with vulnerable people
- Applying for funding effectively
- How to cope with 'failed' asylum seekers
- Training for new volunteers
- Training to support the involvement of asylum seekers in the networks

Overall, the issues raised in relation to training needs pointed to a need for more formalised mechanisms to support new volunteers and to help them adapt to the changing needs of the asylum seekers they will be working with. Participants felt that a more planned approach to recruiting volunteers could be established (with appropriate support), requiring new volunteers to go through a formal set of training procedures common to all networks. At present, most networks did not have the capacity to train new volunteers or to facilitate the involvement of asylum seekers and refugees in the networks. More formalised training procedures could potentially facilitate this process.



## 7. Conclusion

The dispersal of almost 10,000 asylum seekers in Glasgow since 2000 has changed the demographic profile of the city. It has increased the BME population in the city by 60 per cent and has helped to rejuvenate some of the city's schools. In a context of out-migration and a declining birth rate more generally in Scotland, asylum seekers and their families may bring some longer term benefits to the city if they choose to remain there, despite the short-term costs of providing resources in the early stages. However, the role that refugees can play in Scottish society in the future will be dependent on their successful integration. It is therefore of key importance that appropriate services are in place to ease the process of adaptation for asylum seekers and to ensure that they live in a safe and welcoming environment where they can use and develop their skills effectively.

The Scottish Executive is committed to delivering Social Justice in Scotland, a strategy which aims to build a society founded on the values of fairness, equality and opportunity for *everyone* in Scotland. There are strong and valid moral arguments why this should also include asylum seekers who are living in Scotland. The asylum issue poses a challenge to the concept of social justice and the way it is delivered, and raises questions regarding moral and humanitarian obligations which extend beyond the confines of the nation state and citizenship. It challenges Scottish society to consider its role in global processes which may generate refugee flows, and to consider how we might respond to the victims who seek sanctuary here. The way Scottish society rises to that challenge may also have implications for the way other marginal groups are treated.

### Role and Activities of Integration Networks

In Glasgow, support services for asylum seekers have been co-ordinated locally through the mechanism of area-based multi-agency partnerships. These structures were established after dispersal began, when it became clear that there was a need for a city-wide strategy to facilitate a co-ordinated response from the voluntary sector. These structures have facilitated the involvement of the voluntary sector, and have promoted dialogue between the different agencies providing support services for asylum seekers. They have also promoted the involvement of local communities in activities designed to promote social interaction and integration.

A total of ten networks have been responsible for co-ordinating local responses to the needs of asylum seekers in Glasgow. They have evolved independently under locally specific circumstances and have developed their own working practices based on local expertise and participation. Their work has typically evolved in a reactive way, in response to immediate and urgent needs among the asylum seeking population.

The development of local services through the networks has been strongly supported by the involvement of local drop-in centres, which have carried out

humanitarian and signposting roles. Drop-ins have generally been a first point of contact for asylum seekers with their local communities, and have acted as a platform from which to access other services. Some networks have also developed more specific services tailored to particular groups within the asylum seeking community, such as mothers and toddlers, and youth groups. All networks have developed English language teaching at an early stage.

### ***Key findings***

- The work of the networks has been highly reactive, responding to urgent need, with little time for strategic planning.
- The front-line work of responding to very urgent and immediate need was often accredited to key individuals working within voluntary and statutory agencies and to the efforts of volunteers. In this respect, some networks were found to be largely supported by a very small number of highly motivated individuals.
- Individual networks were often driven by bottom-up initiatives. This has rendered their work highly appropriate and responsive to local needs. In many respects, this can be considered a strength, but it also renders the networks very fragile and vulnerable to the departure of key individuals.
- The networks were generally reliant on people who were *very* busy, creating a danger of “burn-out” among key individuals.
- The church drop-ins have played a key role in most networks.
- Volunteers have played an essential role in maintaining the work of most networks.

## **Relative Roles of Statutory and Voluntary Sectors**

Most networks reported positive engagement from key statutory agencies including Social Work, primary health care and community health providers and education services. Problems were reported, however, in relation to GASSP, which in some areas had failed to engage with the networks. There were also problems reported in relation to the operation of NASS and associated impacts on the networks.

### ***Key issues***

- Participants expressed a need for more effective outreach work with new asylum seekers, which could be facilitated by closer co-operation with statutory agencies.
- Concerns were raised about lack of clarity over the roles and responsibilities of different agencies. There was a need for clearer lines of accountability in this respect.
- Voluntary sector agencies expressed concern over failures within NASS, which left some asylum seekers without money or food, often for unacceptable periods.
- GASSP caseworkers had failed to engage with some networks effectively.

- Volunteers had experienced a reluctance among NASS and GASSP caseworkers to engage with them when representing individual asylum seekers with problems.

## **Barriers to the Work of the Networks**

The operation of the dispersal policy has been primarily housing led in Glasgow, and asylum seekers have often been dispersed to areas experiencing multiple deprivation. The networks were acutely aware of problems associated with providing services for asylum seekers in this context, where perceived competition over resources was a key problem.

Participants highlighted problems related to UK immigration and asylum policy, which they believed to be a policy of deterrence which worked against their efforts to help asylum seekers to integrate. They also questioned the extent to which they could carry out integration work when the majority of the services they provide have been used by asylum seekers rather than refugees. There was a general lack of clarity over the extent to which the needs of asylum seekers could be addressed within the current policy framework, where immigration and asylum is not a devolved matter.

### *Key issues*

- High-rise housing was seen as a barrier to social engagement.
- The networks have had to deal with competing and often acute needs associated with poverty and deprivation in dispersal areas, which has created a need for anti-racist work to challenge myths.
- Problems related to community safety and racial harassment were reported in most dispersal areas.
- Competition over resources has made it difficult to provide any specialist services for asylum seekers.
- The Scottish Executive's mainstreaming policy is strongly supported by the networks, who believe it is crucial not to differentiate asylum seekers from the host population through visible specialist service provision.
- UK immigration and asylum policy framework was perceived as inhumane, excessively harsh and punitive, with lack of co-ordination and consistency between different aspects of policy.
- The withdrawal of the right to work for asylum seekers in 2002 made it difficult for the networks to facilitate integration.
- It was felt that devolution of some aspects of policy would be a positive measure.

## **Network Support Needs**

A clear need was expressed by all networks for greater support and full engagement from all statutory agencies working with asylum seekers locally. This could potentially free up time for other activities. Participants also expressed an acute need for more comprehensive and consistent service provision across the city,

with better co-ordination between statutory agencies working with asylum seekers, and clearer lines of accountability for specific services.

*General needs identified across the networks*

- More joined up working practices at the reception phase to facilitate outreach work.
- Some networks still lacked sufficient funding to implement effective English language teaching, and others wished to diversify language teaching and integrate it with other training opportunities, but lacked the resources to implement this.
- Advocacy services were considered inadequate in some areas.
- Youth work was an area which most networks were keen to develop, however, lack of mainstream provision for young people meant that the foundation for this work was lacking.
- Initiatives to promote education and training were identified as an emerging need for the future as more asylum seekers receive refugee status.
- Initiatives to help asylum seekers access appropriate employment opportunities was identified as an area requiring development in the future.
- The 28 days at the 'point of decision' where asylum seekers must determine and implement their future housing options was considered inadequate. More effective input from the Resettlement Team at this time could ease this transition phase.
- More comprehensive provision of interpreting services across the city, as inadequate provision was seen to be impacting negatively on other services which networks provide.
- Targeted training for volunteers which addresses the specific needs of people working with asylum seekers.
- More joined up information about other support services operating across the city to facilitate better signposting.
- More continuous funding to allow more strategic long-term planning. The competitive aspect of obtaining funding was considered unpleasant, and some networks expressed a desire to work together rather than compete for funding.
- Adequate mainstream service provision in dispersal areas where asylum seekers have created extra demands on specific services. This would prevent resentment fuelled by competition over resources. In this respect, pre-school childcare was cited as a key problem in some areas.
- Better co-ordination of crèche provision at colleges to ensure offers of places could be taken up by women.

Addressing these gaps would potentially free up time for the voluntary sector to engage in other community development activities, and allow networks to move away from reactive activities to more long-term strategic planning.

## Issues of Concern

### *Point of decision*

Concern and disappointment was expressed by the networks over the numbers of asylum seekers leaving Glasgow at the point of decision. While this could be partially attributed to an understandable wish for refugees to join friends and relatives in other parts of Britain, it was felt that more could be done to encourage asylum seekers to stay in Glasgow, given that many are skilled and have much to offer once they become settled. It was not possible within the scope of this research to establish the reasons for this apparent exodus, but it was felt that more could be done to facilitate and clarify options during the transition period. While coherent working practices between agencies, and clearer lines of accountability would help this situation, other more specific measures are required:

- Extension of the current 28-day transition period at the point of decision, which was considered to be unworkable.
- More help, advice and information for asylum seekers to clarify their options at the point of decision.
- Specific measures within the housing sector, including cash advances for deposits, to encourage the private sector and specialist housing associations to house refugees. This would widen the range of housing options available to refugees, who may have concerns about community safety and racial harassment in current NASS dispersal areas.
- More information about employment opportunities in Glasgow.

### *The right to work*

The revocation of the right for asylum seekers to work in 2002 was cited many times as a particularly regressive piece of legislation, which had rendered it impossible for asylum seekers to re-establish their lives in Scotland. Employment is considered to be a key aspect of integration, and the networks expressed their frustration that asylum seekers' lives were effectively being put on hold when there was a demand for labour in Scotland. Skilled asylum seekers in particular were seen to be losing valuable time in their efforts to rebuild their careers.

### *Detention*

Concern was expressed over a recent increase in the numbers of detentions of asylum seekers at Dungavel, as this was causing considerable anxiety within the asylum seeking community. Participants were anxious that the criteria for detention should be made clear to the networks so that they can advise asylum seekers about relatives or friends in detention.

## Final Comments

This report has highlighted the progress of the integration networks during a period which has been chaotic, demanding and extremely busy for those involved in the networks. Assessing the needs of asylum seekers and refugees has been an

ongoing process, and their specific needs have not yet been fully incorporated into existing service provision. The fact that dispersal has been housing led and primarily in areas of social deprivation has added an extra dimension to integration work, where perceived competition over resources has raised issues of community safety and racial harassment. Lack of pre-existing BME communities in most dispersal areas has also meant that locally based service providers have had little direct experience of the specialist needs of asylum seekers.

The rapid pace of resettlement has created demands on all sectors involved with responding to the needs of asylum seekers, and relevant agencies have not always been fully prepared to meet these needs. During the initial three years of the dispersal programme, the process of co-ordinating and responding to the needs of asylum seekers has been highly reactive with little time for coherent strategic planning. The voluntary sector has been in the front-line of this response by nature of its activities and has been highly responsive to changing needs within the city. It is expected that in time, the process of "mainstreaming" will ensure that the needs of asylum seekers are met through incorporating their needs into mainstream service provision. It is also expected that the needs of asylum seekers more generally will become incorporated into wider community planning structures.

However despite these teething problems, and despite the lack of community preparation prior to the arrival of asylum seekers, the networks have responded rapidly and effectively, often providing a highly personalised and humane quality of service to people in acute need. This has particularly been the case at the drop-ins, where dedicated volunteers have sought to introduce asylum seekers to their new communities in a safe and supportive environment. The many dedicated individuals working in the networks have demonstrated that despite the racism experienced by some asylum seekers in localities across Glasgow, there is another face to Scottish society which has sought to embrace values of social justice which extend beyond the limits of local communities in the city, and beyond the borders of Scotland. Despite other pressing problems affecting their communities, they have embraced asylum seekers and their needs with humanity and compassion and deserve recognition for their efforts, which have often been beyond the call of duty.

## **Appendix**

### **Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice with the Community Responses Co-ordinating Group**

### **Refugee Settlement and Integration Networks in Glasgow: Assessment of Support Needs April 2003**

**1. Name of network (and when established)**

**2. Geographical areas covered by network**

**3. Agencies involved in the network.**

List the most active agencies

**4. Number of local community groups involved in the network**

List the most active groups

**5. Number of local volunteers in the network**

Total volunteers .....

Of these, how many are refugees?.....

**6. How often does the network meet?**

**7. Ask group to define the broad aims of the network.**

**8. This section will run through a number of different fields. Ask group to consider how successful they think the network has been in planning and developing services in these areas. For each category, ask them to discuss any barriers they have faced in carrying out these activities and any factors which have helped them.**

- Advice, information and orientation
- Cultural and leisure activities
- Work with young people
- Services for women and families
- Befriending
- Drop in services
- Community health services
- English language classes
- Providing advocacy
- Support with education and training
- Support with employment
- Opportunities for religious observance



**9. How effective do you think the network has been in getting statutory agencies to provide services for asylum seekers and refugees?**

**10. Is your network effective in engaging the following groups:  
Are there any barriers you face in engaging any of these groups?  
What helps you to engage these groups?**

- Key players from the voluntary sector
- Key players from the statutory sector
- Key local individuals from host community
- Local asylum seekers and refugees

**11. Has your network been effective in the following areas?  
Are there any barriers you face in carrying out any of these activities?  
What helps you to carry out any of these activities?**

- Linking with other networks over issues of common concern
- Raising issues of concern with the CRCG
- Getting information passed down from the CRCG
- Challenging myths circulating about asylum seekers and refugees
- Lobbying decision makers and influencing policy related to asylum seekers and refugees
- Taking advantage of funding and other opportunities highlighted by the CRCG/Glasgow City Council/Scottish Refugee Council?
- Recruiting volunteers to work with asylum seekers and refugees – explore whether volunteers have been from host community/refugee community
- Responding to the training needs of members and volunteers

**12. Which of the following best summarises the way in which your network is supported at present? (Circulate cards to group)**

- By a community group
- By a church, or church-based project
- By a council department or official (please specify)
- By a local partnership agency such as a SIP
- By a specialist local post recruited for the purpose
- By a specialist agency such as the SRC or GCVS
- By additional financial resources available to existing active network members
- A combination of the above (please specify which)
- Other (please specify)

**13. Discuss the strengths / weaknesses of the support currently provided.**

**14. What do you feel would be the best way to improve or consolidate the way your network is supported? (Distribute cards)**

**By locating the leadership role with:**

- A community group
- A church, or church-based project
- A council department or official (please specify)
- A local partnership agency such as a SIP
- A specialist local post recruited for the purpose
- Provision of additional financial resources available to existing active network members
- Some combination of the above (please specify)

(Point out that all of these options would have resource implications)

**Please give reasons for preferred option.**

**15. Do you think it is realistic to have *integrated* support services for everyone in the community including refugees and asylum seekers, or do asylum seekers have *some* special needs which require separate resources?**

**16. Are there any other comments which you would like to add in relation to the work to support and integrate refugees in your area, the functioning of your network, or how it should be supported?**

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