A bridge to life in the UK

Refugee-led community organisations and their role in integration

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Foreword

At a time when refugee integration is finally back on the Government's agenda, it's a deep concern that the voices of refugees – the experts by experience - are largely and noticeably absent from the debate.

Yet we know that Refugee-led Community Organisations (RCOs) and their networks have a long and impressive track record of supporting the inclusion and participation of their members and are active in almost every locality across the UK where refugees have settled. Indeed, it is because RCOs are routinely overlooked, taken for granted and excluded from integration policy discussions that we commissioned this research.

In doing so our intention our purpose was twofold: to put the work of RCOs squarely on the map by showcasing the diverse and vital work they do – all too often under the radar and with little or no recognition or funding - and to reframe them as unique social integration agencies, with the reach, the insight and the ability to develop practical solutions to the specific problems that refugees face.

Put simply, RCOs are able to engage and support their members in ways that other organisations and agencies cannot. Language, cultural affinity, their cross-generational membership and the trust born of the shared experience of forced exile, enable RCOs to operate holistically and intuitively, and, in doing so, overcome impediments to independence that confound most mainstream organisations, whether in the statutory or the voluntary sectors.

Yet, when it comes to funding or commissioning or planning, the reality is that they are largely at the back of the queue. The reasons for this marginalisation, when RCOs could and should be much closer to the centre of public and civic life, were also explored in the research and the findings are as stark as they are predictable. A chronic lack of resourcing over many years, exacerbated more recently by the impact of austerity and the indiscriminate hostile environment, has penned many RCOs in a cycle of instability that, all too often, calls into question their dependability in the eyes of authorities, funders, commissioners and even their voluntary sector and NGO peers.

We intend that this research will lead to a major reassessment of the value and importance of RCOs in delivering not just better refugee integration outcomes, but also broader community integration and cohesion goals. We will be using it to call on Central Government to engage directly with RCOs when framing its asylum and refugee policies; on Funders to focus as much on RCO infrastructural investment as on transactional, competitive grant funding; on Commissioners to ring-fence resources that will enable RCOs to reach and engage the most excluded; on Devolved and Local Government to recognise and value the evidence and engagement of RCOs in planning; and on NGOs and civil society institutions to see RCOs as equal partners.

There is much learning for the Refugee Council too. We'll use the findings of this research to raise our own game, enabling RCOs to better shape the things we do and inform the things we say. We'll also champion the active participation of RCOs in the national and local debates and decisions that affect their members' daily lives and we'll work with funders and commissioners to ensure that RCOs are able to secure the resources they need to achieve their potential. This report provides an excellent basis upon which to start those conversations.

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Chief Executive, Refugee Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION – AIMS AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The Refugee Council has commissioned this research to help policy makers, funders and other stakeholders to understand the role of refugee-led community organisations (RCOs) and how they contribute to wider policy objectives such as integration, inclusion, cohesion and equality. It also examines the challenges faced by RCOs and how civil society support organisations and other support can help RCOs to oveRCOme these challenges and sustain and develop their contributions to integration.

RCOs are defined as organisations led mainly by people from communities whose members include significant numbers of refugees, and whose services and activities are intended for refugees. RCOs may define their communities by nationality, language or geographical area, while others serve specific groups such as women or young people. Others focus on a specific need or service.

The role of RCOs in integration has been recognised in previous policies on refugee integration. These have now been replaced by a broader focus on integration in the context of wider community.

This research explores the activities of RCOs, the outcomes they deliver for their communities and how these outcomes contribute to current policies on integration as well as other policies that focus on themes that are often cited to define integration: identity and sense of belonging, civic participation, independence, English proficiency, employment, education, health and cohesion.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology was designed to explore the three main issues addressed by the research: the activities and outcomes of RCOs and their role in integration; the challenges faced by RCOs; and support to help RCOs sustain and develop their role in integration. It was also designed to explore the local context in which RCOs operate, including policy, funding and support. The methodology thus included four main elements:

A **review of selected literature and internet research** looked at evidence on the activities of RCOs, their funding and their place in policies on integration and civil society.

It also included selected frameworks for defining and measuring integration as well as evidence on support available to RCOs.

Interviews and focus groups with 32 RCOs and seven refugee forums explored RCO activities, outcomes, challenges and support and examined the role of forums in supporting RCOs and facilitating voice. The sample included RCOs of different sizes, locations and communities served. Some were new and others long-established. A large proportion were single-nationality groups from countries associated with the largest numbers of asylum applications in 2006 and 2016, as well as groups serving multiple nationalities, women, LGBTI people, young people and people with mental health needs.

Interviews with selected policy makers, funders, support organisations and public services examined the environment in which RCOs operate and how they were views and engaged with by key stakeholders.

Local and regional roundtables were held to discuss the draft report with RCOs and other stakeholders. RCO forums organised all but the London roundtable. Discussions are reflected in the final report.

3. RCOs IN ENGLAND IN 2018

RCOs have a long history in England, playing an important role in helping newly arrive refugees to settle. Despite limited support from government-sponsored programmes for refugees, the collective contribution of the hundreds of RCOs in England has arguably been greater than support from national programmes. RCOs in this study have seen the results of their work in the successes of community members and their children who live, work and play an active role in UK society.

The process of selecting some 30 RCOs for this research from over 250 that were identified in the target areas revealed some insights about RCOs in England. Many have become less active, have reduced income or have ceased operating. At the same time, new RCOs are being formed and new refugee communities are setting up RCOs. There are indications that refugees are organising in new ways, often using social media.

Overall, RCOs appear to be declining in number and capacity, though it was not possible to establish whether a similar pattern of attrition would be found among organisations of comparable size and purpose. It is clear, however, that refugees still seek to organise themselves to address community needs and aspirations.

4. RCOs AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

RCOs were asked to define their purpose as organisations, identify the communities they served and describe how they engaged with their communities.

The original purpose of many RCOs was to meet the immediate needs of new arrivals and later evolved to address longer term needs. Many RCOs saw integration as a key aim but sometimes defined integration in their own terms. Some RCOs saw their role as actively encouraging community members to integrate, promoting the benefits of integration and oveRCOming concerns about identity.

In addition to promoting engagement with wider society, some RCOs also sought to unite and strengthen their community by promoting faith, culture and language, building confidence and creating an active, healthy community.

When RCOs had more specific purposes, such as empowering women or supporting LGBTI people, they also promoted integration through engagement with public services and wider society.

RCOs reach their communities in many ways, including advertising, a quarterly magazine, social media (online communities), radio, word of mouth and outreach. As one RCO put it, 'we go where people are' – mosques, community centres, events, social services, housing offices, other RCOs, GP surgeries, hospitals and Jobcentre Plus.

Community members are involved in RCOs as service users, volunteers, staff, trustees and members of project advisory group. As one RCO leader put it, 'we are the community'.

5. RCO ACTIVITIES, OUTCOMES AND ROLE IN INTEGRATION

RCOs engage in a wide variety of activities and services. The report examines in detail eighteen different RCO activities. Services for community members included information and advice, supplementary education, mental health, social and recreational activities, volunteering, health and well-being, ESOL, employment, children and young people, family support, services for women, services

for disabled people, civic participation and support for LGBTI people. Some RCOs also worked to influence policy, law and practice. Others delivered training and awareness raising for public services while others raised public awareness and carried out research.

RCOs activities were found to deliver a wide range of outcomes in areas such as educational attainment, reducing isolation, English proficiency, employability, access to public services, health and mental health and volunteering. Many of these outcomes were measure and recorded, often using CRM systems that RCOs frequently employed. In some areas such as mental health, standard measures were employed to monitor results.

RCO outcomes were compared to the themes and indicators identified in the Mayor of London's new Social Integration Strategy and to objectives and indicators associated with selected local authority strategies. RCOs delivered outcomes that clearly contributed to many of these objectives and to positive changes in key indicators. This clearly shows that RCOs contribute to common measures of integration and objectives associated with public policies in areas such as health, educational attainment, isolation, employment, English proficiency, civic participation and volunteering.

6. RCO ASSETS AND WAYS OF WORKING

RCOs were found to have three important assets: **reach**, **insight** and **solutions**.

RCOs have the ability to **reach** members of their communities. Many factors played a role here: contacts with community members, community languages, cultural affinity and trust. RCOs can engage with people in ways that other organisations would find difficult if not impossible.

In terms of **insight**, RCOs understood the factors, often cultural or associated with the experience of being a refugee, that influenced behaviour and attitudes and had to be addressed in helping to identify and solve problems and fulfil aspirations.

RCOs have the ability to find **solutions** to the barriers and challenges facing refugees. The research uncovered many examples of services and activities that had been successfully designed to bring about positive outcomes.

RCOs also demonstrated ways of working that are central to their success:

Enabling independence and engagement is a priority for RCOs. They identify key enablers such as confidence,

social networks, English proficient, information and volunteering that can help people become more independent.

A **holistic approach** addresses multiple needs and factors that contribute to successful integration, either through their own range of services or those provided by partner organisations.

Partnership is key to the work of many RCOs. They identified a wide range of partners that help them achieve results.

7. CHALLENGES FOR RCOs

RCOs face many challenges, including the needs of their communities and the issues confronting their communities. These include increasing demand for services by new arrivals and people with No Recourse to Public Funds, reduced provision in areas such as ESOL, increases in hate crime, lack of understanding for refugees, Universal Credit and online services such as NHS Choices.

Funding and commissioning also brought challenges, though good practice among some funders was making it easier for RCOs to communicate their plans for helping service users. Small organisations such as RCOs were often at a disadvantage in commissioning.

Premises and people were cited as challenges, with premises becoming more expensive and less available. Many RCOs cited difficulties in recruiting volunteers and trustees, particularly since RCO rely heavily on volunteers to deliver their activities.

As small, specialist often single community organisations, RCOs were not always appreciated for the role they played and outcomes they delivered for their communities. The role of single-community organisations in supporting engagement with the wider community and in serving non-community members was not always recognised. Smaller organisations were often at a disadvantage in commissioning.

Engaging in local planning was also difficult, largely due to their limited capacity or because planning processes were inaccessible.

RCOs also faced challenges in some areas of organisational development, notably financial management, governance, HR, commissioning, strategic planning and ICT.

8. SUPPORT FOR RCOs

Effective support can help organisations surmount some of the challenges they face. The research asked RCOs what support they currently received and explored the role of specialist support.

Some general findings emerged. RCOs are very resourceful at finding and using available support from a range of sources. However, many RCOs reported that affordable support is often hard to find, with free and low-cost assistance is less common now. Support organisations and funders observed that available support is not always taken up by RCOs – their limited capacity and reliance on volunteers sometimes mean they cannot take advantage of training and other opportunities.

Sources of support identified by RCOs included local councils for voluntary service and other mainstream sources such as the NCVO, funders, local authorities, quality systems and accreditation, specialist support organisations in areas such as supplementary education, advice and violence against women, informal support from partner agencies, pro bono support from individuals and specialist support from other refugee organisations. Refugee forums whose members are RCOs and who may provide premises, organisational development and voice were found to be an important source of support for many RCOs.

Asked about specialist support for refugee organisations, RCOs identified the following roles:

- Involving RCOs in advocacy work on national policy
- Advocating on behalf of RCOs and their work
- Helping RCOs advocate at local level
- Filtering and communicating information on policy, support, funding and other issues relevant to RCOs
- Providing support to small and emerging RCOs, including access to small grants and premises
- Leading and supporting partnerships and commissioning involving refugees and/or refugee organisations
- Providing tailored support for RCOs on governance, trustees, finance and fundraising
- Facilitating communication and sharing good practice among refugee forums

The research also found that the specialist support functions identified in The Way Ahead vision for civil society support in London were in line with existing specialist support for RCOs.

9. RCOs, NATIONAL POLICY AND LOCAL PLANNING

RCO activities and outcomes were found to contribute to some national policies such as the forthcoming Integrated Communities Strategy. The new Civil Society Strategy includes provisions that are relevant to RCOs and their activities. The forthcoming Community-Based English Language programme could benefit communities served by RCOs.

Local authorities are introducing co-production, place-based and systems approaches that could enable RCOs to plan and deliver local strategies and services. Other initiatives such as civil society mapping could support this, as could expanded support for civil society by local authorities.

The research also identifies ways in which these approaches could be strengthened, including utilising RCO evidence in local planning, more accessible planning mechanisms and support for data collection and engagement in planning.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research has identified some key findings about RCOs:

- RCOs see integration as a key role and encourage refugees to engage with the wider community and UK society

- RCOs are often cost-effective, professional organisations and deliver outcomes that are directly relevant to objectives in many policy areas including health and well-being, English proficiency, employment, education, cohesion, civic participation, community safety and stronger families

- RCOs display a holistic, systems-based approach by addressing multiple factors in oveRCOming disadvantage and involving partner organisations to achieve results

- RCOs use key enablers such as English proficiency and volunteering to foster independence, self-reliance and engagement with wider society

- RCOs reach people that others do not

To help RCOs develop and sustain their role in integration, the report also recommends the following action by key stakeholders:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS AND COMMISSIONERS

- Adopt accessible grant-making processes and assess the impact on RCOs

- Consider grant-funding as an alternative to commissioning some services

- Ensure that commissioning is viable for RCOs and other small organisations

- Include grants for RCOs in funding programmes for refugees

- Extend capacity-building to non-grantees

- Support the capacity of RCOs to gather evidence and engage with local planning

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AND OTHER MAINSTREAM CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT

- Ensure effective support is in place for small and emerging RCOs

- Contribute to a comprehensive mapping of local civil society

- Build the capacity of RCOs and other community organisations to collect data

- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIALIST CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT FOR RCOs

- Provide support for small and emerging RCOs

- Support refugee forums and facilitate the sharing of good practice

- Involve RCOs in national advocacy work

- Raise awareness of RCOs to policy makers, funders, civil society support, public services and other stakeholders

- Identify specialist needs and ensure access to mainstream support

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

- Recognise the contributions of RCOs when developing refugee policies

- Invest in RCO contributions to social policy objectives linked to integration

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Provide small grants for RCOs in the early stages of development

- Develop co-production, place-based and systems approaches to planning

- Utilise RCO evidence in local planning

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RCOs

- Engage with local support organisations and planning processes

- Develop the capacity to gather data and other evidence

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION – AIMS AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The Refugee Council has commissioned this research to gain a better understanding of refugee-led community organisations (RCOs) in England and how their activities contribute to integration. The research aims to help policy makers, commissioners and funders, public service providers and other stakeholders to take account of how the outcomes delivered by RCOs can contribute to wider policy objectives such as integration, inclusion, cohesion and equality. It also examines the challenges faced by RCOs and how civil society support organisations and other support can help them to meet these challenges and sustain and develop their contributions to integration.

Refugee-led community organisations have long held a prominent place among the diverse range of local, regional and national organisations helping people seeking asylum and refugees to settle and integrate in the UK. A 2016 report by the New Philanthropy Foundation estimated that some 900 such organisations were active in England. The report recognises that many of these are refugee-led and serve communities which are often defined by nationality or county of origin, but also by geographical area or language. Some also serve specific groups such as women or children and young people. Others focus on a specific need or service, such as mental health or education [1].

Defining what counts as a refugee-led organisation is not straightforward. In 2005, *Integration Matters, A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, defined RCOs as 'organisations led by and for refugees'[2]. However, many community-led organisations working with refugees also work with people who have come to the UK by other routes than the asylum system, and often work with second and third generation community members. Leadership of some refugee organisations is also mixed,

with trustees, staff and volunteers from both the wider community and communities of refugees. This research defines RCOs as organisations led mainly by people from communities whose members include significant numbers of refugees and their descendants, and whose activities and services address the needs of refugees. This definition embraces a wide variety of organisations, as will be seen from the research.

The role of RCOs in integration has been recognised by policy makers in the past. National refugee integration strategies published in 2000, 2005 and 2008 recognised the role of RCOs and national policy included a dedicated funding programme for RCOs, including community and organisational development support[3]. In 2007 the Home Office and National Refugee Integration Forum commissioned a framework for refugee community development.

London Enriched, the Mayor of London's first integration strategy published in 2009 also recognised community development as an important element of integration and the role of refugee-led organisations as instruments of community development[4]. *London Enriched* was subsequently extended to migrants as well as refugees, and the *London Enriched Update in 2013* recognised and supported the role of communities in integration[5]. Refugee integration in London is currently addressed as part of *All of Us, The Mayor's Strategy for Social Integration*[6]. This is discussed in more detail below.

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1 *Solutions for Sanctuary, An Overview of the Refugee and Asylum Charity Sector in the UK*, Jennifer Shea, Plum Lomax, Russell Hargreaves, New Philanthropy Capital, June 2016

2 *Integration Matters, A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, UK Border Agency, 2005.

3 *Full and equal citizens: A strategy for the integration of refugees into the United Kingdom* (2000), *Integration matters: a national strategy for refugee integration* (2005), *Moving on together: Government's recommitment to supporting refugees* (2009) Home Office

4 *London Enriched, The Mayor's Refugee Integration Strategy*, Greater London Authority, 2009.

5 *London Enriched Update*, Greater London Authority, 2013

6 *All of Us, The Mayor's Strategy for Social Integration*, Greater London Authority, 2018

There is currently no refugee integration strategy for the UK or England, though in some areas community development is part of the support offered to refugee communities in the Gateway resettlement programme and Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

Nor are refugees a protected group under equalities legislation, though the Single Equality Duty recognises that many refugees often belong to protected groups and recommends that public bodies consult organisations working with refugees and migrants in developing their equality strategies. This sometimes results in local structures that enable engagement with refugee community organisations and support their organisational development.

Recent government strategies have focused on social integration, also taking a broader view of integration rather than focusing on refugees. In 2012, the government published an integration strategy, *Creating the Conditions for Integration*, that was aimed at society in general. In March of 2018, the government invited views on its *Integrated Communities Strategy* green paper, again aimed at society in general[7].

In London, *All of Us, The Mayor's Strategy for Social Integration* also targets all Londoners, rather than refugees and migrants who were the focus of previous strategies. The Mayor's strategy defines integration in terms of four domains: relationships, participation, equality and outcome. Each domain includes several themes. These include social mixing, hate crime, social isolation, volunteering, employment rate gap, educational attainment, English proficiency and a feeling of belonging, to name a few. Indicators for each theme enable progress on integration to be measured[8]. Since many of these domains, themes and indicators are often used to define refugee integration, the Mayor's strategy offers a convenient and up-to-date definition of integration. It is used here as a basis for assessing the role of RCOs in integration.

Local authority strategies also include domains such as health, education, employment and civic engagement that are often included in common definitions of refugee integration. Community strategies, equality strategies and health and well-being strategies set out objectives such as reducing health inequalities, narrowing gaps in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community, increasing independence, self-reliance and well-being, empowering people, improving educational attainment

and getting people into employment. These strategies and relevant objectives are also used here to establish the role of RCOs in integration.

The research aims to gain a better understanding of what RCOs do, how they work and the outcomes they achieve. It also looks at how RCOs contribute to integration as defined by existing policy objectives. Finally, it examines the challenges facing RCOs and how effective support and engagement with policy makers can help RCOs to sustain and expand their role in integration.

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7   *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper,* HM Government, 2018
8   The full table of domains, themes and indicators is reproduced in full as Appendix A of this report.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology was designed to gain an understanding of the three main issues addressed by the research: 1) the activities and outcomes of RCOs and their role in integration; 2) the challenges faced by RCOs; and 3) support for RCOs that can help them sustain and develop their role in integration. It was also designed to explore the local context in which RCOs operate, including policy, funding and support.

The methodology consisted of four main elements:

- A review of selected literature and internet research

- Interviews and focus groups with 32 RCOs and 8 refugee forums in England

- Interviews with key stakeholders: policy makers, funders, support organisations and public services

- Roundtables and consultation with contributing organisations on the draft report

Each element is described in more detail below and participants are listed at the end of this report.

2.1 REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE AND INTERNET RESEARCH

A review of selected literature and online sources examined evidence on the activities of RCOs, their funding and their place in national, regional and local policies on integration and the voluntary sector. Selected frameworks for defining and measuring integration were examined, including current work on social integration by the Greater London Authority, as well as local authority strategies related to integration. The review also looked at evidence on the support available for RCOs, including the Way Ahead programme in London. The documents consulted are listed in the references. The findings of the literature review inform relevant sections of this report.

2.2 INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS WITH RCOs AND REFUGEE FORUMS

The research conducted interviews and focus groups involving 32 RCOs in England. RCOs were selected to reflect the diversity of refugee-led organisations. They included both newer and older organisations, and varied in size, location, purpose and the communities they served.

Length, format and content of interviews and focus groups

The research initially planned semi-structured interviews with 30 RCOs, 15 in London and 15 in selected regions outside London. Due to the time taken to arrange interviews in London, it was decided to hold small focus groups in Manchester, Oxford, Gateshead and Middlesbrough. These were facilitated by the Manchester Refugee Support Network, Asylum Welcome in Oxford and the Regional Refugee Forum North East. Interviews with three RCOs in Sheffield were arranged by the Refugee Council.

Interviews lasted from 90 minutes to 2 hours, except for those in Sheffield which lasted one hour. Focus groups ranged from 2 to 3 hours in duration. Focus groups allowed less time for each RCO to discuss its work but had the advantage of allowing participants to identify common, and diverging, themes and challenges in their local environment.

The interviews explored the three main areas of interest: 1) the activities and outcomes of RCOs and their role in integration; 2) the challenges faced by RCOs; and 3) options for better supporting RCOs. Interviews were semi-structured and were guided by a series of questions and prompts for each area of interest. These questions were sent to participants prior to the interviews to allow time for reflection and get as much as possible from the interviews. Two RCOs responded in writing instead of attending focus groups or interviews.

Not all questions were asked in each interview or focus group, nor was it always possible to explore questions in depth. However, the semi-structured interviews allowed RCOs to talk about their activities as they saw them, emphasising and expanding on issues of importance to them.

RCOs interviewed for the research

RCOs were selected to reflect their diversity in size, age, location and the communities they serve. Based on the income bands used by the NCVO, the sample included micro organisations with annual income under £10,000, small RCOs with income between £10,000 and £100,000, medium-sized RCOs with income between £100,000 and £500,000 and one large RCO with income over £500,000.

RCOs also included both new organisations set up in the past few years and older organisations founded up to 40 years ago. Some newer and smaller organisations were not registered with the Charity Commission or Companies House, but all had governing documents and management committees.

In London, RCOs from a range of locations were selected, but the London sample also included a few small clusters of RCOs in the same borough to sample the experience of RCOs operating in the same environment. Key stakeholders in these boroughs were also interviewed. Outside London, the sample included RCOs from a selection of regions and locations within those regions.

The sample included RCOs serving a range of communities. Many RCOs define their community by nationality. The sample reflects this by including a substantial proportion of single nationality RCOs, selected because they serve nationalities associated with the largest number of asylum applications in 2006 and 2016 (comparing two years identified both newer and longer established communities).

Also included were RCOs who served multiple nationalities or who defined their communities in terms of specific groups such as women, young people, LGBTI people or people from a certain region, ethnicity or language community. Some RCOs in the sample focused on specific needs or activities such as mental health or supplementary education.

RCOs were selected from at least 250 organisations found in the Refugee Council's database, local directories and from the membership lists of refugee forums in London and selected regions. Refugee forums and support organisations were also asked to identify RCOs in their areas. Charity Commission and Companies House directories, RCO websites and local directories were used to identify those organisations which appeared to be refugee-led and serve refugees. They were also used to estimate their size (based on income, staff and volunteers) and assess whether they were currently active.

In addition to identifying a diverse range of RCOs to be interviewed, information gathered during the selection process revealed something of the current state of RCOs in England. These findings are presented in a later section.

Refugee forums

In addition to facilitating focus groups in some areas, one regional and six local refugee forums were interviewed about their role in enabling RCO engagement and supporting organisational development. Refugee forums

are defined here as organisations composed of RCO members which support RCOs and enable them to engage with policy makers and other stakeholders.

2.3 INTERVIEWS WITH POLICY MAKERS, FUNDERS, SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS AND PUBLIC SERVICES

The research also included interviews with selected stakeholders. The aim was to examine the environment in which RCOs operated, how they were viewed by policy makers, funders, support organisations and public services and how these organisations engaged with RCOs. The findings of these interviews are not presented separately but included throughout the report.

2.4 ROUNDTABLES AND CONSULTATION WITH CONTRIBUTING ORGANISATIONS

Roundtables for RCOs and other contributing organisations were held to discuss the draft report. The purpose was to identify inaccuracies and omissions, explore some topics in more detail and help shape findings and recommendations in the final report. Regional roundtables were organised by refugee forums. These were attended by some contributing RCOs as well as other forum members. Key points from these discussions are reflected in the final report.

3. RCOs IN ENGLAND IN 2018

RCOs have a long history in England. A full account of this history is not possible here, but refugee-led organisations have for decades played an important role in helping newly arrived refugees to settle in the UK.

As refugees have sought proetection in the UK from upheaval, conflict and persecution in a succession of countries, including Chile, Vietnam, Iran, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Afghanistan, countries of the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Congo and many others, RCOs were formed to help new arrivals. The full range is reflected in the nationalities which appear in the asylum statistics. At times refugees have been supported by government programmes for some or all new refugees. This support has often been delivered by large refugee-assisting charities, though recently support has been commissioned from local organisations. Despite very limited support from national refugee programmes, RCOs have always played an important role in helping new refugees to settle successfully in the UK. Alongside the considerable support provided by other local charities, the collective contribution of the hundreds of RCOs in England has no doubt been greater over the years than government-funded programmes to support refugee integration. The RCOs in this research all had their origins in the arrival of refugees from countries of upheaval and conflict and have seen the results of their work in the successes of their community members and their children who live, work and otherwise take an active role in UK society.

Selecting the RCOs from the hundreds in England yielded some insights about RCOs in England. Of over 250 organisations initially identified and then investigated via internet research, a considerable number had been removed from the Charity Commission or Companies House registers or were not up to date in filing annual reports. Of those still registered and up to date, many showed reduced income over the past five years, with a considerable number reporting no current income at all. Others had discontinued websites and were using Facebook while some no longer had an online presence.

Many RCOs were difficult to contact, particularly smaller ones. A few declined to take part, citing lack of time.

At the same time, new RCOs are being formed. Internet research showed more smaller organisations outside London, and the sample included more new or emerging RCOs in the regions, though this may be slightly skewed by the fact that refugee forums played a greater role in facilitating contact with RCOs and could identify emerging RCOs more readily. Two emerging or aspiring Syrian RCOs were interviewed, indicating that recently arrived communities are still interested in organising themselves and have clear ideas of how to help their communities. There were also some indications that refugees are organising themselves in new ways, often using social media. This phenomenon would be well worth exploring but was beyond the scope of this research.

Outside London, participating RCOs included many not registered as charities or companies. This was partly because refugee forums and support organisations who facilitated interviews and focus groups outside London were asked to include smaller and newer organisations to balance the mainly larger and older organisations interviewed in London. It may also reflect a tendency for RCOs outside London to be smaller and newer, as indicated by internet research on refugee forum members in several cities.

There also may also be a trend for newer RCOs to serve multiple nationalities rather than define their communities by a single nationality, particularly where refugee communities are smaller or, as one forum suggested, in dispersal areas with history of multi-cultural settlement. This was sometimes reflected in the names of organisations as well as in their communities, though some newer single nationality RCOs also adopted names that did not include the nationality of their communities.

One refugee forum reported that RCOs were often most active in the early years after arrival when needs were most acute, then became more informal and less active. In some cases, RCOs disappeared due to people returning to countries of origin in response to improving conditions.

The research did not set out to assess the current state of RCOs or compare their experience with similar community organisations, so it is not known whether a similar pattern of attrition would be found among other similar organisations. However, the overall picture suggests RCOs may be declining in number and capacity. One civil society support organisation for refugees estimated that half the RCOs in London disappeared each year, while one RCO reported that only four organisations representing one community now remained of the seventy that once existed. Despite this apparent decline in RCO activity, it is clear refugees still seek to organise themselves to address community needs and aspirations, sometimes in new ways.

4. RCOs AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

In interviews and focus groups, RCOs were asked to define their purpose as organisations, to identify the communities they served and to describe how, as organisations, they engaged with their communities.

The methodology of this research was not intended to determine exactly how many RCOs displayed a specific characteristic or engaged in a given activity or service. The aim instead was to explore the range of RCO activities, the outcomes they delivered and how they achieved these outcomes. Not all RCOs were asked all the questions in the interview so the proportion of RCOs giving a specific answer could not be calculated. It is recognised, however, that it is useful to know approximately how prevalent specific features or activities are among the RCOs in the sample. In this and subsequent sections, therefore, statements about RCOs therefore indicate whether they apply to one, some or several, many or most RCOs. The plural form 'RCOs' without a quantifier simply implies a statement that is generally true of RCOs in the sample. Sometimes expressions such as 'in many cases' or 'frequently' are used to indicate how often a statement applies to RCOs in the sample. 'All' or 'always' are rarely used, for the reason cited above.

4.1 HOW RCOs DEFINE THEIR PURPOSE

In many cases, defining the purpose of an RCO elicited the story of its founding. Many older RCOs had been set up meet the immediate needs of new refugees. Over time, their focus shifted to integration and the needs of more established communities that now included second and even third generations.

Many RCOs viewed integration as a key aim but offered various definitions of integration. One RCO viewed itself as a "bridge to life in the UK", others described roles such as facilitating swift integration or helping with the language and enabling community members to contribute to the UK, participate in British society and become 'law-abiding citizens'.

Several RCOs reported that some community members were reluctant to integrate, sometimes due to a fear of

a loss of identity or because they did not feel the need. The RCOs saw it as their role to persuade community members that integration was beneficial both to them and the wider community and did not threaten cultural identity, while also emphasising the achievements of most refugees in participating in and contributing to UK society.

In addition to promoting engagement with the wider community, RCOs also saw their role as uniting and strengthening the community, promoting the culture, faith and the language of the community, building confidence and creating an active, healthy community.

Some RCOs had more specific aims such as helping women to recover from domestic and honour-based violence, empowering refugee and migrant women, supporting LGBTI people or helping children and young people. Even when focused on specific groups and their needs, RCOs often defined their purpose as helping these groups to integrate by engaging with public services and the wider community.

RCOs often cited campaigning as part of their purpose. Campaigning issues included fair asylum policies, trafficking, LGBTI people seeking asylum, child detention, treatment of unaccompanied children and women's rights. Challenging immigration decisions was a priority for one RCO, who saw legal challenges as improving laws and legal practice. Many also saw their purpose as influencing public opinion and fostering a more accurate and positive perception of refugees.

4.2 HOW RCOs DEFINE THEIR COMMUNITIES

The RCOs in the research all served people who had come to the UK as people seeking asylum or refugees or via other immigration routes, including their children and generations born in the UK. While most RCOs emphasised that their activities and services were open to all refugees, each defined the community they served in a different way. These communities included:

● People mainly from a single national or ethnic background

- People from a region or language community (either within a country or encompassing more than one country)

- Women and girls from a specific national, regional or language background

- LGBTI people from a specific geographic background, e.g. Africa or the Middle East

- Children and young people from a specific national background

- Refugees of all backgrounds

At the same time, the majority of RCOs, including single nationality organisations, said they welcomed people of other backgrounds, including people from the wider community, particularly at social or cultural events. One reported that currently only 30 per cent of its users were of the national background which the organisation was founded to serve. Other older organisations reported similar trends towards working with more people from outside their main community, often newer arrivals or people from smaller communities. Some of the newer organisations, particularly in areas with smaller refugee communities, worked with multiple nationalities, reflecting the composition of the local refugee community. One RCO defined its community as families of children with autism or disabilities; its users included many members of the wider community.

Some RCOs expressed a desire to do more to help community members expand their contacts with the wider community. One RCO thought this was a role that local authorities could help to facilitate and was considering whether to remove its national affiliation from its name, seeing it as a possible barrier to attracting people from outside the community.

It should be noted that RCOs serving people from a single national background may nevertheless be serving separate communities within the national group, perhaps reflecting cultural, kinship or regional affinities. It cannot be expected that a single nationality organisation will necessarily serve all people of that national background. An interesting finding was that some single nationality RCOs distinguished themselves from other RCOs of the same nationality by the relationships formed in refugee camps before coming to the UK. These relationships sometimes cut across the ethnic or other identities that united other RCOs of the same nationality.

Nor do RCOs reach all refugees in a given area, even though most welcome people of all nationalities. Some

refugees may not need assistance or choose not to seek help from RCOs. One local authority pointed out that RCOs do not reach all the most disadvantaged in their communities, citing outreach in hostels that was needed to find some refugees. Reaching all members of a specific group would be an unrealistic expectation of any organisation. The research shows that RCOs employ a wide range of outreach measures and are likely to serve many refugees who are isolated, disadvantaged and unable to meet their own needs. They are thus important partners for policy makers seeking to address inequality and disadvantage.

4.3 ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

RCOs reported reaching community members in many ways: advertising, a quarterly magazine, social media (online communities), radio, word of mouth and outreach. As one RCO put it, 'we go where people are' – mosques, community centres, events, social services, housing offices, other RCOs, GP surgeries, hospitals and Jobcentre Plus. Accessibility through drop-in facilities and activities outside normal working hours were also a factor. Many RCOs felt they could do more to exploit the potential of digital media, while some were using Facebook to communicate, with one reporting an online community of 30,000 members and EU-wide networks that linked people to support and enabled community members to report cases of modern slavery.

Community members were also involved in identifying needs and evaluating services. RCOs cited methods that included research, surveys, feedback forms, user groups and informal observations. The accessibility, trust and safe environment they provided was felt by many RCOs to encourage users to come forward with problems, requests or suggestions.

Community members were involved in all aspects of running most RCOs. As one RCO put it, "we are the community", meaning that trustees, staff and volunteers came mainly from the community itself. Many reported that community members followed a path from service user to volunteering and playing a role in running the organisation and delivering its activities. In some cases, ex-service users were on advisory panels and steering groups for projects.

Some RCO management committees also include members of the wider community who bring additional skills and networks. One RCO was seeking to recruit more refugee members to its committee, which had come to include a large proportion of trustees from the wider community.

5. RCO ACTIVITIES, OUTCOMES AND ROLE IN INTEGRATION

RCOs were found to deliver a wide range of activities, as will be seen from the descriptions of these activities below. RCOs were generally very aware of outcomes and how they delivered them. While no doubt due partly to funder requirements, a stronger motivation seemed to be a commitment to deliver positive results for community members.

RCOs also reported a wide range of ways in which they documented their outcomes. These included evaluation and feedback forms completed after sessions, user interviews, focus groups and case studies. One RCO tracked participants to monitor the impact of a project after its completion. Evaluations were carried by some RCOs; one had a policy of independently evaluating all projects whenever possible. For some activities, such as mental health and domestic violence, standard assessment tools were employed. Many RCOs reported using customer relationship management (CRM) software that could be used to record interventions and outcomes.

Some RCOs also identified outcomes more informally, through oral feedback and contact with members. These were not always recorded.

In addition to information on outcomes, RCOs generally recorded information about service users. This often took place during first contact when user details were recorded. Some RCOs had a membership structure and asked users to complete a membership form. User information recorded by RCOs was not explored in detail, but appeared to vary, sometimes within one organisation, depending on what service or activity was involved. One RCO aimed to develop a single form that could be used for all services.

Although they recorded information about users, mainly in connection with specific services and related to needs, interventions and outcomes, no RCOs in the sample created detailed profiles of users by systematically recording key socio-economic data such as postcode, income, employment status, educational level, qualifications, health, literacy, housing situation, family situation and English proficiency. Limited capacity and a focus on information relevant to specific needs and activities was one reason for this. Some RCOs also cited the reluctance of some users to share information. One was wary of using such data to reinforce stereotypes about user groups.

However, most RCOs were very aware of the socio-economic background of their users and the implications this sometimes had for tailoring services such as ESOL classes, skills development or employment support to user needs. One project recorded educational level and compared outcomes for participants of different levels. There is potential for RCOs to record more such information, which would be useful both to them and to policy makers and funders seeking to target interventions that address specific factors contributing to disadvantage or inequality.

Many RCOs expressed a desire to document their activities and communities more effectively, noting that demands on staff time, lack of IT resources and the need for better monitoring skills were barriers to better measurement and recording of outcomes.

The following sections describe the services and activities that RCOs identified in interviews and focus groups, along with the outcomes and documentation of these activities. Outcomes for selected activities are summarised in boxes; only outcomes that were specifically mentioned by RCOs are included. Interviews and focus groups did not seek to identify outcomes for all activities – the aim was to find examples of clear and if possible documented outcomes. As a result, outcomes are not identified for all activities, including some, such as ESOL, where possible outcomes are obvious and easy to document. In some cases, independent evidence is cited for the outcomes of specific activities, including community-based English, sports and supplementary schools.

5.1 INFORMATION, ADVICE AND INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

Information, advice and advocacy – taken here as a single activity – were the most common activity of the RCOs in the sample. This included advice on a range of issues, including benefits, housing, health, employment, education and others. Advocacy in this context means advocating on behalf of service users, as opposed to advocacy on policy or practice. Some RCOs provided immigration advice with OISC accreditation; others facilitated access to immigration advice from other sources. Most RCOs providing immigration advice were OISC accredited to Level 1 or 2, meaning that for many issues they signposted or referred to providers with Level 3 accreditation[9]. This appeared to be a key function, enabling them to function as a first port of call and helping users to find reputable immigration advisors. One RCO reported unscrupulous advisors to the OISC, thus helping to ensure quality advice. Several others had well-established relationships with trusted advisors to whom they could make referrals.

Many RCOs saw it as their role to introduce community members to UK society in general and particularly to key public services and entitlements. The ability to deliver advice and information in community languages and provide interpreting when needed was generally a feature of this service, as was advocacy on behalf of users. One RCO produced information materials on health issues in community languages and disseminated a bi-monthly health newsletter. Advocacy could include accompanying them to appointments or communicating with service providers. RCOs delivered this service in different ways: some operated drop-in services, often in day centres that offered other activities, while others required appointments or combined both approaches. Many RCOs emphasised that accessibility was a priority and contrasted their approach with other services.

For new arrivals, information, advice and advocacy are particularly important. Many established RCOs were set up in the past to help people seeking asylum and refugees arriving in the UK; some now see few new arrivals while others still see significant numbers of newcomers, including some from other parts of the UK or Europe. Most newer RCOs in the sample were set up by more recent arrivals to introduce new communities to UK society and public services, as their older counterparts did in the past.

Advocacy on behalf of users is a key element in this service. RCOs support users by contacting service providers on their behalf. One reported contacting housing providers about repairs and working with service users to avoid rent arrears – an important outcome for both users and housing providers. Another reported better experiences of health services through advocacy. It should be noted that while RCOs undertook advocacy on behalf of their service users, they also took steps to enable users to practice what one called 'self-advocacy'. This emphasis on independence is a striking feature of RCO services and is discussed in more detail below.

Some RCOs reported using proprietary CRM software such as Sales Force or free software such as Advice Pro from Advice UK or the AIMS system from the Lasa charity to record user information, services and outcomes. Other RCOs still used paper-based systems and entered data in Excel spreadsheets for analysis. RCOs varied in the amount and type of data they recorded on service users but had the potential to record more socio-economic data that could be used to establish user profiles.

5.2 SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION

The research deliberately included several RCOs who provided supplementary education, an area in which outcomes were expected to be relatively easy to measure and record. RCO supplementary schools in the sample all taught community languages to children and young people. For one newly arrived community, this was a priority. For most RCOs improving educational attainment in mainstream schools was also a priority. In addition to providing tuition in community languages, schools also provided instruction in culture and religion.

Provision varied from Saturday schools to after school classes and homework clubs. One school offered instruction in maths and English at all levels from SATS to GCSE; others also offered instruction in mainstream subjects. Some schools helped parents to support their children's education, providing information on education in the UK, the importance of a good environment for learning at home and how to engage with schools.

Supplementary schools were often seen as places where other issues could be addressed, particularly other learning needs. One school hosted parenting and anti-terrorism sessions delivered by the local authority. The same school had set up a separate youth charity run by young people from the community who mentored pupils. ESOL for parents was provided by some supplementary schools.

9   The OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) regulates immigration advice and accredits advisers at three levels of competence.

Many RCOs felt that supplementary schools helped to address inter-generational tensions between parents who came to the UK with a clear sense of identity from their home country, and children who were born in Britain or arrived at a young age and were immersed in British society through the educational system. For the second generation, competence in the community language enabled communication with parents who might have limited English, especially with single-parents who faced additional pressures and may have had fewer opportunities to learn English. Supplementary schools also provided a venue for exploring issues of identity and values. Some RCOs felt that supplementary education helped young people to arrive at an identity that was British but also included and valued the culture of their parents. Fostering an identity that embraced both cultures was seen to help young people engage positively and confidently with the educational system and the wider community.

Many RCOs providing supplementary education were conscious of outcomes and aimed to improve competence in community languages and educational attainment through supplementary schools. Several RCOs in the sample had been awarded the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE) Gold Quality Mark, which assesses monitoring. One RCO set its own targets for pupils, consulting national statistics and meeting with parents to set targets more ambitious than those set by schools. The RCO then set a scheme of work for pupils and parents, recording parents' involvement. Some RCO schools reported as outcomes the numbers of pupils sitting GCSEs in community languages and their results. Several felt that supplementary schools improved motivation and engagement with education, including higher education, but evidence for this was anecdotal.

Some RCOs recognised the need for better documentation and expressed the intention to improve. Time and capacity were common barriers to documentation. One RCO observed that the new pupil assessment system made it more difficult to monitor progress in primary school. It should be noted that in general, the outcomes of supplementary education are well-documented[10].

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10 For example, see *Supplementary Schools, Descriptive analysis of supplementary school pupils' characteristics and attainment in seven local authorities in England in 2007-08 and 2010-11,* David Evans and Kirsty Gillan-Thomas, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2015, and *Saturdays for Success, How Supplementary Education Can Support Pupils from All Backgrounds to Flourish*, IPPR, Vidhya Ramalingam and Phoebe Griffith, 2015.

SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION – OUTCOMES

- GCSEs in community language
- A-grades in community language GCSE
- A- and B-grades in maths and English
- Improvements in primary school attainment
- Access to higher education
- Confidence and motivation
- Identity, values and sense of belonging

5.3 MENTAL HEALTH

Two RCOs in the sample specialised in mental health services while several others offered mental health support alongside other activities, reflecting the high incidence of mental health issues in refugee communities. One RCO highlighted the factors that contributed to mental health problems among refugees: the experience of violence, the journey to safety, the shock of a new culture, lack of support networks and generational conflicts.

Mental health services offered by RCOs included counselling, one-to-one support and group activities. All RCOs emphasised early intervention and prevention and worked closely with mainstream mental health providers.

One specialist RCO described how the service had been developed initially at the instigation of a mainstream mental health professional and a community-led steering group. The group steered the model towards a psychosocial approach and the talking therapies it thought would be more effective. Eventually, with the help of a specialist support organisation for RCOs, members set up an organisation and developed a model that complemented mainstream services and established a clear role in mainstream mental health strategies. The service now includes community mental health workers, a day centre, outreach, supported housing for older people with mental health needs, printed information on health and mental health and support for carers that encourages them to get involved in Care Assessment management. Reflecting the holistic approach typical of RCOs, its day centre organises ESOL classes, outings and social activities.

Several RCOs reported documenting mental health outcomes via standard tools such as the Recovery Star system, Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale and GAD-7 for anxiety. One reported working with statutory partners to identify appropriate outcomes for RCO services. Quality standards were also important in this

area. One RCO had recently become IAPT (Improving Access to Counselling and Psychological Therapies) compliant in its services to tackle anxiety and depression.

MENTAL HEALTH – OUTCOMES

- Improvements in mental health as measured by tools such as Recovery Star system
- Take-up of mental health services
- Self-referrals
- Reduced rates of hospitalisation
- Increased awareness of mental health among refugees
- Solutions to factors affecting mental health such as housing and benefits

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5.4 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

RCOs in the sample reported a wide range of health-related activities. A key role, especially for new arrivals, was familiarising users with health care in the UK and how to use health services. One RCO invited health care professionals and specialists to talk to users about services. Other RCO activities included health education and awareness activities on general issues or specific topics such as TB, bronchitis and HIV. One RCO was working with a hospital to raise awareness on vitamin D deficiency, another ran a cancer support group and a third had held an event on dementia. As with mental health, much of the focus was on prevention and oveRCOming stigmas connected with conditions such as TB.

Some RCOs also ran exercise classes and cooking classes that promoted healthy eating. Health advocacy was provided by some RCOs, and here again the focus was on enabling self-advocacy; one RCO contacted practitioners to ask about certain tests and otherwise advocated on behalf of users. As highlighted above, this RCO also encouraged users to ask the same questions themselves – an example of RCO empowerment in connection with health. The same RCO found that some users avoided health services because they were unsure of their entitlements or wanted to avoid being challenged on their eligibility; in response, the RCO provided information on health care entitlements. Because of this work, GPs now contact the RCO for advice on information packs and other issues.

In contrast to mental health, documentation of health activities was less systematic and often informal, such as service users reporting changes to exercise patterns or diet.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING – OUTCOMES

- Increased awareness of health issues such as diet, exercise, TB and others
- Improved health and well-being
- Positive changes to diet and exercise
- Improved access to appropriate health services
- Improved care via self-advocacy

5.5 ESOL

As noted above, all RCOs saw English proficiency as a key enabler and encouraged users to take up appropriate ESOL tuition. Many also offer ESOL themselves and are often able to offer tuition that some users are more comfortable with or find more accessible. People with childcare responsibilities or who have low levels of literacy and educational attainment may do better with tailored instruction in a supportive environment alongside others with similar needs. One RCO offered 'taster' ESOL sessions, designed to encourage learners to take up other provision. ESOL offered by RCOs often aimed to reach learners who would not or could not take up other provision and enable them to progress to mainstream ESOL courses.

One RCO embedded ESOL tuition in other activities before this practice became widespread in mainstream institutions. Another had developed a tailored approach to delivering ESOL for women as part of a national programme of community-based English language. Providing ESOL for parents has already been mentioned as one of the activities connected with supplementary schools.

RCOs offering ESOL tuition did not report any formal documentation of ESOL outcomes related to proficiency. Given the many standard measures of ESOL achievement, this is somewhat surprising. It may be that RCOs chose not to mention these – interviews did not explore outcomes for all activities – or perhaps ESOL outcomes were thought to be self-evident. It may also be that ESOL providers did not seek to measure proficiency in standard ways. For example, one ESOL project whose broader aim was empowerment did not measure proficiency in English; instead it identified outcomes such as answering multiple choice questions on health and education, attending parent school meetings alone, reading newspapers, volunteering and other behaviours enabled by English.

In view of RCOs' commitment to encouraging English acquisition as an enabler of integration and independence,

it would be useful to explore not only the impact of ESOL on English proficiency but also on other outcomes such as confidence, access to public services, contacts in the wider community and sense of belonging. An evaluation of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Community-Based English Language programme found limited impact on social integration, though on some measures participants started at fairly high levels[11]. It would be interesting to see whether RCOs, with their holistic approach and often extended engagement with users, achieve better results from a lower starting point.

SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES – OUTCOMES
● Reduced isolation
● Increased confidence
● Improved health and well-being
● Expanded social networks

5.6 SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Social and recreational activities were features of many RCOs, which is not surprising given their role as community organisations. Activities include day trips, summer camps, events to mark religious or other holidays, coffee mornings, lunch clubs and exercise sessions. As already noted, many such activities first drew users to the organisation and led them to take up other activities and services. This type of activity reduced isolation, expanded social networks and built confidence. By providing a safe, welcoming environment RCOs could also encourage participants to raise issues that could then be addressed by other services. Some encouraged contacts with the wider community. Documentation of such activities took the form of evaluations, questionnaires, focus groups, user interviews and informal feedback. For some RCOs, these activities were also an opportunity to find out what users needed and wanted and what activities they liked and did not like.

5.7 VOLUNTEERING

Many RCOs provide access to volunteering opportunities. RCOs themselves rely heavily on volunteers; many RCOs in the sample had no paid staff and the proportion of volunteers to paid staff may be even greater for RCOs than other small voluntary organisations working with refugees. However, RCOs see volunteering is a key

element in the holistic, enabling approach that many of them employ.

Volunteering was viewed by RCOs as supporting a wide range of outcomes, including confidence, social networks, English proficiency, mental health, learning, independence and employability. It may also contribute to civic participation and cohesion. The research found limited evidence that volunteering outcomes were documented, though they were often regarded as instrumental in other outcomes.

The range of volunteering opportunities offered by RCOs was explored in more detail in the roundtables held to discuss the draft report. These include opportunities within RCOs and with external organisations. Activities included administration, gardening and working with children. One RCO reported that efforts were made to match volunteering opportunities with the individual's aspirations and interests. The impact on refugees of volunteering in a non-RCO setting is shown in research by Voluntary Action Sheffield, which reported positive outcomes in health and well-being, employability and social integration[12]. Similar outcomes were reported by RCOs.

VOLUNTEERING – OUTCOMES
● Increased confidence
● Expanded social networks
● Increased independence
● Improved English proficiency
● Work experience
● Improved mental health
● Increased civic engagement
● Enhanced skills and knowledge

5.8 EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Employment is a major challenge for many refugees. Many factors conspire to make finding work difficult: lack of English, low levels of education and literacy and lack of qualifications and skills caused by disrupted economies and public services in countries of origin, lack of UK work experience and references, employers' unfamiliarity with their immigration status, inability to document qualifications, qualifications not recognised in the UK, unfamiliarity with the UK labour market and recruitment practices and lack of networks. Even when refugees are more qualified, RCOs report they may find it

11 *Measuring the impact of Community-Based English Language Provision*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018.

12 *New Beginnings Project – Evaluation Report*, Rattenbury, Emma, Voluntary Action Sheffield, 2010.

difficult to find work that is commensurate with their skills and experience. Recent research notes that it can take many years for measures of refugee employment, such as employment rates and earnings, to converge with those of the wider community[13].

For many, particularly women who may be more isolated, have less access to English tuition, be constrained by childcare responsibilities in the UK and have had limited educational opportunities in countries of origin, the safe and supportive environment offered by RCOs, with a range of activities that build confidence, motivation and support networks as well as opportunities for learning and volunteering, is an effective route into employment.

RCOs in the sample delivered a wide range of activities designed to help people into work. These included training, particularly in IT, help preparing CVs, signposting to further and higher education opportunities and job search skills. Many highlighted the importance of working with Jobcentre Plus; one RCO received funding for its activities to help women into employment. Another RCO offered an alternative to simply getting into work by also encouraging users to develop their skills and find employment more commensurate with their qualifications and aspirations.

Other partnerships were also important: one RCO was part of an ESF-funded employment project and many cultivated partnerships with employers and Jobcentre Plus. One received Jobcentre Plus funding for some activities. There was evidence of innovation as well: one RCO used a 'speed dating' approach to connect service users with employers and another supported business start-ups.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS – OUTCOMES

- Increased work readiness through CVs, references and interview skills
- Qualifications gained
- Enhanced skills and knowledge
- Job interviews secured
- Jobs

5.9 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In addition to supplementary schools, many RCOs support children and young people in other ways. These include mentoring, youth work, sports, outings and other leisure activities, summer camps and youth groups. Some offered gender-specific activities.

Several RCOs worked extensively with unaccompanied children and children in care. One provided support such as cooking meals for looked after children while another ran supported accommodation under local authority contract. Another RCO worked with schools who saw them as an equal partner who could make an impact in concrete ways such as preventing exclusion.

One RCO worked extensively with police to help them deal more effectively with young people in the community, with the aim of both preventing criminality while finding ways to avoid formal sanctions that would be an obstacle to integration.

RCOs reported a range of outcomes associated with children and young people. One completed action plans with young people that enabled them to document activities and outcomes.

5.10 FAMILY SUPPORT

Family support was an area in which RCOs and refugee forums were active. Forum activities in this area are discussed in the section on refugee forums. RCO activities included parenting classes, family learning, child protection awareness and mediation, support for parental engagement with schools and information on fostering and adoption. As discussed earlier, some of these activities were delivered via supplementary schools.

Child protection was an important issue for RCOs, many of whom worked to educate parents about acceptable practice in the UK and help social workers to understand cultural factors that could help them engage more effectively with families. One RCO highlighted the importance of finding solutions to problems while avoiding formal measures that could have a detrimental effect on family life.

A range of outcomes were associated with this work, but no examples of recorded outcomes were identified by RCOs. Some documentation is reported in the section on forums.

13 *Differences in labour market outcomes between natives, refugees and other migrants in the UK*, Ruiz, Isabel and Vargas-Silva, Carlos, SSRN, 2018.

5.11 SERVICES FOR WOMEN

A considerable number of RCOs in the sample provided services for women and girls and several of them worked exclusively with women and girls. Activities focused on issues such as isolation due to language and cultural barriers, FGM, domestic violence, honour-based violence, poor health due to inadequate diet, lack of physical activity, failure to use NHS services and mental health issues including anxiety and depression. One was tackling high rates of suicide and drug overdose among girls in the community. Specialist RCOs for women were particularly active in tackling violence against women and girls. Several provided training sessions for other organisations, including mainstream services.

RCOs provided a place for women to speak about their problems and develop a support network. Activities to address these issues included information, interpreting, individual advocacy, mentoring and group work. The aim was to help women acquire life skills, become more independent and gain access to mainstream services, education and employment.

Two RCOs in the sample focused on violence against women and girls, supporting recovery from domestic and honour-based violence through one-to-one casework, counselling, crisis intervention, ensuring safety and helping women to develop recovery plans. Outreach in hospitals and the police was used to ensure access. Confidence building, support networks and empowerment were key elements in this service. Outcomes were documented by focus groups, interviews and feedback forms.

5.12 SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Many RCOs serving long-established communities had developed services to meet changing needs. Several provided services for older people, including lunch clubs, day centres, social activities, outings and outreach for those with limited mobility. No documentation was reported, but outcomes included reduced isolation and independence.

5.13 SUPPORT FOR LGBTI PEOPLE

Unlike the activities already described, support for LGBTI people was not a common activity among RCOs. However, the research highlighted the distinctive nature of this support and the challenges faced by many LGBTI people seeking asylum and refugees. Many of these centred on the asylum process itself and the fact that some LGBTI people had come to the UK by means such as marriage before it was possible to claim protection based on persecution as an LGBTI person. This could complicate issues of identity and place in the community as well as immigration status. Lack of trust in the authorities and other institutions, common to many refugees, was said to be even more widespread among LGBTI people seeking asylum and refugees, thus inhibiting the ability to find help. While persecution in countries of origin was the cause of flight, similar attitudes could also be encountered in the UK among communities from those countries. An RCO led by members of the LGBTI community could thus play the same role as other RCOs, providing a safe space and activities to discuss problems, develop support networks and build trust and confidence while at the same offering practical help in engaging with key services. This work also aimed to play a role in changing attitudes among diaspora communities. No documentation was reported but a range of outcomes was associated with these activities.

5.14 COMMUNITY SAFETY

RCOs and forums reported engaging with the police about hate crime. One reported an increase in the reporting of hate crime following awareness raising and new measures to encourage reporting. One RCO talked to the police about ways to discourage criminality while avoiding avoid cautions and their impact on citizenship. The same RCO also worked with the police on gang violence and issues such as witness protection and engaged with the police on domestic violence with the aim of avoiding interventions that might separate families. Many sports, recreational and social activities for young people aimed in part to reduce the risk of criminality and gang involvement.

The intended outcomes of these activities were clear to RCOs, but no documentation of outcomes was reported. One project on hate crime was too new to assess impact. The preventative nature of some activities makes it hard to demonstrate outcomes, though there is evidence that sports reduce risk of criminality among participants[14].

5.15 SERVICES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

The research included one RCO which supports disabled children and young people and their families with social activities and information, advice and guidance on care, health, education and social development; its users include members from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and the wider community. Another was engaged in a joint project for disabled people. Documentation included feedback forms.

14 *Crime Reduction and Community Safety*, Professor Fred Coalter, Sport England, 2012

5.16 CIVIC PARTICIPATION

RCO activities included promoting voter registration, understanding of local government, the rights of citizens and the role of local councillors and MPs. No examples were offered of how these outcomes were documented.

5.17 OTHER ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES FOR USERS

In addition to the activities and services described above, RCOs delivered other activities and projects for community members and users. These included financial planning, often identified as a need via other services such as advice or mental health, or a seen as part of anti-poverty work. Other initiatives included an anti-gambling project, community radio and sessions on energy-saving. One RCO ran accommodation centres for looked after children and another provided short-term emergency shelter.

5.18 INFLUENCING LAW, POLICY, PRACTICE AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Alongside activities aimed at service users, some RCOs worked for change that would benefit community members in other ways, using evidence from their direct services or knowledge of communities to inform this work. RCOs undertaking these activities frequently did so through refugee forums or umbrella organisations.

Campaigning and influencing

Several RCOs saw campaigning as a major role and many had joined national and local campaigns. Issues included detention, voluntary return to Iraq, country of origin information, the handling of asylum applications in the cases of women LGBTI people, ESOL provision, hate crime, FGM, the Domestic Violence Bill, the tampon tax and others. One campaigned for a GCSE in a community language. Another joined other RCOs to influence the Reaching Communities fund, which was felt to be inaccessible, and helped to get changes made.

Refugee forums reported working with national campaigning organisations such as Asylum Matters and Cities of Sanctuary.

Shaping local services and policy

Many RCOs had worked with providers to shape local services and policy, often as members of local or regional networks and forums on specific issues such as health, advice services, ESOL, community safety, disability, cohesion and Violence Against Women and Girls. RCOs also contributed to consultations on local strategies,

services and needs; examples included contributing to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a consultation on social services. Many RCOs acknowledged they did not always have time to take part. One noted that time spent on such activities was not paid for, but the organisation took part because it was in the interests of service users.

In addition to contributing via specific engagement mechanisms, RCOs sometimes worked directly with service providers on issues affecting the community, such as gangs, domestic violence, stop and search or child protection cases involving the community. This sometimes led to improved practice on the part of these services and better outcomes for community members.

Refugee forums also helped shape local services and policy. One had successfully campaigned for links with RCOs to be recognised by the local authority in establishing a local connection. A regional forum had worked with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Home Office to speed up National Insurance numbers for new refugees; this contributed to procedures that have now been rolled out nationally. The same forum had also influenced policing practice and health services. One local forum worked to introduce third party reporting in response to increased hate crime, addressing the reluctance of refugees to report hate crime directly to the police.

Training and awareness raising

Many RCOs reported delivering training for frontline staff and practitioners in public institutions such the health service, local authorities and schools. RCOs in London provided training for public service staff on violence against women and cultural competence. RCOs working through a regional forum delivered training for social workers and social work students on working with families from different cultural backgrounds.

Legal challenges

One RCO undertook legal challenges to actions by the immigration authorities and felt this contributed to better legal practice in these areas.

Research

One RCO in the research had collaborated with a university to conduct research on suicide among young people from their community. Another had conducted research for a local authority. A refugee forum reported carrying out research on a wide range of topics.

Public awareness

Many RCOs contributed to awareness raising activities such as Refugee Week, often as members of refugee forums. One RCO worked with a local arts organisation to stage a cultural project that highlighted commercial and aesthetic links between Britain the country of origin that arose from the manufacture of traditional culture. The purpose of another RCO was to support families with autistic or disabled children; its users included many families from the wider community who were introduced to refugee families and children.

5.19 RCO OUTCOMES AND INTEGRATION

Comparing the wide range of outcomes reported by RCOs with the themes, objectives and indicators shows clearly that RCOs are contributing to the themes and indicators of the Mayor of London's Social Integration Strategy. A similar comparison to local authority objectives and indicators shows they also contribute local authority strategies.

Key areas in which RCO outcomes match policy objectives and specific indicators include: social isolation, volunteering, employment, educational attainment, voter registration, English proficiency, digital skills, financial resilience, health and well-being, independence, mental health and narrowing gaps in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community. These findings show that policy makers should regard RCOs as making significant contributions to key policy objectives and seek ways to support these contributions to their objectives.

KEY FINDINGS

- RCOs deliver clear outcomes in domains of integration, including English proficiency, volunteering, employment, access to public services, education, health and well-being, mental health, civic participation and others
- RCOs are committed to measuring and recording outcomes and employ a range of methods to do so
- RCO outcomes contribute to positive changes in many of the indicators identified by the Mayor of London's Social Integration Strategy and key local authority strategies

6. RCO ASSETS AND WAYS OF WORKING

In exploring the many activities of RCOs and how they engage with communities, the research also uncovered assets and ways of working that seem characteristic of, and perhaps unique to, RCOs.

6.1 KEY ASSETS: REACH, INSIGHT AND SOLUTIONS

RCOs were found to have three important assets. One was the ability to reach members of their communities. Many factors played a role here: contacts with community members, community languages, cultural affinity and trust. RCOs can engage with people in ways that other organisations would find difficult if not impossible.

The second asset was insight. RCOs understood the factors, often cultural or associated with the experience of being a refugee, that influenced behaviour and attitudes and had to be addressed in helping to identify and solve problems and fulfil aspirations.

The third asset was the ability to find solutions to the barriers and challenges facing refugees. The research uncovered many examples of services and activities that had been successfully designed to bring about positive outcomes.

All three assets were essential to the effectiveness of RCOs in the sample. Many other organisations deliver important outcomes for refugees. However, the research suggests that these distinctive RCO assets enable them to reach people and get results where other organisations could not.

6.2 ENABLING INDEPENDENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

A striking finding of the research was the emphasis RCOs placed on enabling independence and engagement with wider society. Their advice and advocacy services were of course focused on meeting immediate needs by helping users gain access to services and entitlements or find solutions to problems. However, this was frequently combined with measures to make users more independent and encourage engagement with the wider community.

As one RCO explained, they constantly asked themselves whether their services fostered independence.

RCOs used a variety of strategies for encouraging independence. One RCO completed an assessment of each new user, then worked with the service user to develop a plan to meet her needs. The plan assigned tasks to both the advisor and the service user. For example, the advisor might help the user to write a letter that she would then take to the relevant service provider. The user would report back, enabling the outcome to be recorded. Cases managed in this way would not be closed; users would be advised at an appropriate stage that they could now go to the CAB or other agency for help.

Another RCO provided users with information about relevant medical tests and other information they could use to help ensure their needs were addressed by medical professionals. As discussed earlier, several RCOs described their approach as enabling 'self-advocacy'. One described talking to users about what they could get from contacts with service providers and others.

Some RCOs contrasted their own emphasis on empowerment by suggesting that some organisations not led by refugees, while providing useful assistance, were more comfortable with dependence than full empowerment, though this was not felt to be true for all of them.

RCOs also identified key enablers to independence. Though community languages may have initially been the medium of communication and assistance, ESOL was a priority for RCOs, as noted above. Information was another, enabling people to use public services and other provision.

Confidence and supportive social networks were also seen as key factors in helping people to move on to using public services, ESOL, volunteering and employment. One RCO offered 'taster' ESOL courses designed to motivate and prepare users for mainstream ESOL provision. For users lacking in confidence, with little experience of formal education or facing other barriers

to mainstream tuition, RCOs offered English courses in a safe, familiar and supportive setting. Such tuition improved competence in English but also offered a pathway to mainstream ESOL provision or other learning opportunities.

Involvement in the RCO itself, sometimes facilitated by formal membership arrangements was another enabler. As noted earlier, community members often progressed from service user to volunteer, trustee or project board member, sometimes facilitated by membership in the RCO. This progression facilitated acquisition of many skills, experiences and contacts along the way, all of which could assist engagement with wider society, including the labour market.

6.3 A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Another distinctive feature of RCOs was their holistic approach. RCOs recognised that many factors may need to be addressed to oveRCOme disadvantage, and that these factors are often inter-related. A feature of this holistic approach was the emphasis on partnership with service providers who could meet specific needs.

The earlier discussion of RCO activities offers many examples of their holistic approach: mental health services that address other issues which affect mental health; supplementary schools that address educational attainment, identity, parental engagement with schools, inter-generational communication and ESOL; coffee mornings or other social activities that first brought users to the RCO and built trust, confidence and social networks, providing a place where issues and concerns could be safely raised and users directed to other services.

This holistic approach is also evident in other ways. A single activity such as volunteering can achieve multiple outcomes, helping to reduce isolation and build confidence while also enhancing English proficiency and employability. Changes brought about by RCO activities can be mutually reinforcing: good quality housing contributes to better outcomes in education, health and employability, while health and well-being enhances education and employability. Health awareness sessions that focus on physical health can be used to encourage discussion of mental health in communities where mental health needs are difficult to acknowledge openly.

This holistic approach and activities to build confidence and motivation and foster independence means that RCOs are often in contact with many users for an extended period. This extended engagement may seem like dependence and isolation from the wider community.

As can be seen from the research, however, RCOs use this extended engagement to address the multiple factors behind disadvantage and in the long run help users achieve greater independence and engagement with the wider community.

A useful by-product for policy makers is that this extended engagement means that RCOs are often better able to observe and record the outcomes of their interventions. One RCO project included follow-up interviews to assess the long-term effects on participants[15].

6.4 PARTNERSHIP

Interviews and focus groups explored the importance of partnership working for RCOs, who frequently emphasised partnership as a key factor in delivering outcomes for users. Participants reported partnerships with many organisations in all sectors. One RCO emphasised that partnership with non-refugee organisations was more important than cooperation with those not specifically working with refugees. Another list more than twenty partners on its website. This section identifies some of the partners who are important to the activities of RCOs in the research. Refugee forums, an important form of partnership among RCOs, are discussed separately.

Local authorities were a key partner; many RCOs worked with local authorities and local authority departments such as housing, social services, education, public health, PREVENT teams and others.

On health and mental health issues, RCOs worked with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), GP surgeries, their local Health Watch, Cancer UK, hospitals, local BAME health networks and MIND. Some were members of local consortia funded by CCGs.

Partners in education included the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE), other supplementary schools and mainstream schools.

RCOs working on employment and skills cited partners such as Jobcentre Plus, employers such a Starbucks, Amazon and NHS Professionals, trade unions and other employment projects. One was a partner in an ESF-funded project on employment.

On women's issues, Solace Women's Aid, IMKAAN, the VAWG Consortium in London and local VAWG networks were important partners. Many RCOs reported close

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15 *Lost in Translation No More*, Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation, 2015.

partnerships with organisations working with victims of domestic violence.

RCOs providing advice were members of networks such as the London-wide Black and Minority Advice Network (BAN) as well as local networks; many also worked with CABs, immigration advice agencies and other advice services. For RCOs not providing immigration advice, links with OISC-accredited immigration advisors were crucial. Advice UK was also a partner for advice.

London Youth, the National Citizen Service and Afruca were partners in work with children and young people.

Other partners mentioned by RCOs included the Royal Society for the Blind, the William Morris Foundation, the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough Environment City, the Ubele Initiative and local MPs.

KEY FINDINGS

- Promoting independence and English proficiencies are priorities for RCOs
- RCOs offer three key assets: reach, insight and solutions
- The holistic approach of many RCOs and their extended engagement with community members are keys to their results and enable them to observe outcomes and impact
- Partnerships with a range of stakeholders are very important to RCOs and their work

7. CHALLENGES FOR RCOs

The research also aimed to understand the challenges faced by RCOs in sustaining and developing their activities. In interviews and focus groups, RCOs discussed these challenges, some of which may be common to other small voluntary organisations, particularly those serving BAME communities. Challenges fell into several broad categories, each of which is discussed in the next sections.

7.1 ISSUES FACING COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND SERVICE USERS

RCOs cited many challenges that arose from the circumstances and needs of their communities and service users, and which RCO activities were designed to address.

For many RCOs, meeting the demand for their services was a challenge, with many RCOs reporting increasing demand. In some cases, demand was led by the numbers of new arrivals while other faced a constant and growing demand for more activities, particularly training. Helping users gain access to external services was limited by reduced provision in areas such as ESOL.

Increases in hate crime and public hostility, ascribed by some to the referendum on EU membership, were a challenge cited by many RCOs, as was the discrimination faced by many service users, particularly in the labour market. Other challenges were a lack of understanding of the reasons for migration, the challenges faced by new arrivals and a tendency to see refugees as vulnerable without recognising the contributions they could make, particularly the second generation. Other external factors such as the introduction of Universal Credit with its online application and delayed payments also presented difficulties. Online services such as NHS Choices presented problems for many community members.

Refugee communities also face challenges inherent in the asylum system and immigration policy. Some RCOs cited the lack of a government sponsored integration programme, apart from the dedicated support for refugees on resettlement programmes. Others cited long waits for asylum decisions as inhibiting successful integration. Another noted that people seeking asylum were ill-prepared for the transition from asylum support to refugee status. One RCO was part of an international network of community organisations and contrasted successful employment programmes for refugees in some countries with the difficulties experienced by its own community. People with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) were also a challenge for RCOs.

There were positive aspects to UK policy as well. Several RCOs in the sample served refugees who had come on resettlement programmes. The extended support provided under those programmes (one year for Gateway and five years for those arriving through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme) were viewed by some as an opportunity to support successful integration and build strong communities, provided local programmes included support for community development. In one area, this included support for emerging RCOs and a refugee forum. The challenge for resettlement programmes is ensure that RCOs from those communities make the transition from specialist support to more generic support and form the partnerships typical of established RCOs.

7.2 FUNDING AND COMMISSIONING

The majority of RCOs cited funding as a major challenge. Many factors were at play: less public funding and more competition, changing funder priorities, lack of funding for core costs and the short-term nature of some funding. Some RCOs felt funders placed more emphasis on innovation than on sustaining successful projects and services; others noted that funders sometimes prioritised partnership at the expense of meeting needs. Some activities were viewed as hard to fund, including mother tongue classes and child care costs which were essential in enabling access for some users. The different reporting requirements of funders were a challenge for some RCOs.

Some local authorities prioritised grants for organisations which also had funding from other sources. Requiring multiple funding sources might make sense as a measure of organisational capacity or a way of consolidating resources; however, it might also be a barrier to emerging organisations who were delivering important outcomes.

A few RCOs felt that refugee organisations did not get a fair share of funding; one thought that mainstream organisations got a share of local funding that was out of proportion to the number of users they served.

Grant applications

Though the research included many RCOs who have raised funds successfully for many years, there was some evidence that RCOs are at a disadvantage in preparing applications compared to other small organisations. The first round of the UK Community Foundations New Beginnings Fund made relatively few grants to refugee-led organisations. According to one stakeholder, the quality of applications was cited as a factor. In the second round, an altered application process that included pre-application engagement resulted in more successful applications.

Another funder reported that doing away entirely with application forms had improved access for RCOs and other small organisations. One local authority and an independent funder reported that RCOs sometimes gave very convincing accounts of their activities and outcomes that were not always reflected in written applications, suggesting that pre-application engagement might be a solution. Some RCOs expressed similar views and several commented positively on funders who actively engaged in discussions about projects as part of the funding process.

Funders interviewed for this research did not report differences in the quality of applications from refugee-led organisations, though they did not always distinguish RCOs from other organisations or found it difficult to do so. Several RCOs in the sample resorted to pro bono or paid assistance with funding applications. The issue of grant applications was explored in the roundtables. Challenges for RCOs included language, especially formal written English, inexperience in funding processes and lack of time (compounded by writing in a second language and the challenges of settling in the UK, which affected RCO leaders and volunteers as well as community members). Some RCOs felt there was sometimes a lack of trust in RCOs among funders. A few RCOs reported that funders consulted larger charities about RCO applications; they felt these larger charities might undermine RCO applications.

Finding new sources of income

RCOs were often keen to explore alternative sources of income, and some reported success in marketing bespoke ESOL and attracting donations. Several RCOs said that limited capacity and time made it difficult to implement their ideas for generating income. One RCO had set up a separate a catering business as a social enterprise to generate revenue for its activities.

Commissioning

Commissioning was a major challenge for many RCOs, particularly those with health-related activities who engaged with commissioning by CCGs (Care Commissioning Groups). RCOs welcomed local partnership or consortium approaches to commissioning as this offered scope for including smaller, specialist organisations, in contrast to commissioning services from larger, often national organisations from outside the area. However, some partnership approaches were preferred to others. One RCO with experience of several CCGs cited communication, transparency and clarity of requirements as key to recognising the contributions of smaller organisations. Another noted that there were advantages to consortia led by agencies who were not themselves service providers and therefore had no conflict of interest but also acknowledged that such agencies might lack the necessary expertise. Joint bids led by large local providers were in some cases seen as inclusive and effective, while in other cases RCOs pointed out that commissioners did not have sufficient knowledge of how funds were allocated within the consortium, so RCOs and other smaller partners might be disadvantaged. For RCOs, particularly those operating in more than one locality, understanding commissioning was a major challenge, complicated by different approaches taken by commissioning bodies. We return to this issue in the sections on support and local planning.

7.3 PREMISES AND PEOPLE

Along with funding, two other basic resources were a challenge for RCOs: premises and people.

Premises

Premises are needed by RCOs to sustain their activities or develop new ones, particularly for RCOs in London with its high rents and property prices. Some reported the recent loss of premises while others pointed to decreased availability of space provided by partners such as GP surgeries or local authorities. One funder observed that RCOs and other BAME organisations sometimes experienced discrimination in the use of premises that were available to community organisations, and one RCO reported being treated unfairly when booking premises. One RCO reported being unable to use local authority property because of its policy of offering premises for communities, not organisations.

There was also evidence of solutions. One RCO was in discussions with a funder about expanding its facilities. A few local refugee forums were funded by local authorities to provide free or affordable shared office space and venues for community groups, though another had seen its space reduced. Another forum had access to a community hub for its members' use and one RCO reported using space in a faith-based community hub. Some local authorities taking part in the research were looking at ways to make spaces more accessible to community organisations or facilitate sharing among civil society organisations.

John Lyon's Charity in London has introduced an innovative model for local organisations working with young people that included a venue database to allow the sharing of premises among members[16]. RCOs also welcomed efforts by funders to engage with organisations about prospective projects and services during the pre-application and application process.

People

Recruitment of volunteers and trustees was a challenge for many RCOs. The RCOs in the sample all relied heavily or exclusively on volunteers for their activities. While policy makers and funders welcomed the value added by volunteers, the need for infrastructure and resources to recruit and manage volunteers was not always recognised. Some RCOs noted that it had become harder to recruit volunteers from their community, for reasons such as changing demographics and individual priorities. Some reported that younger members and those of second generation were less interested, though others were very successful in recruiting younger members. One had set up a separate charity for younger people that cooperated with its supplementary school as well as operating its own activities.

7.4 RCOs AS SMALL, SINGLE COMMUNITY AND SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS

Many of the challenges faced by RCOs were attributed to a perceived lack of understanding and appreciation of small, specialist, single community organisations.

One RCO felt that BAME issues were not effectively mainstreamed and sometimes seemed like an 'add-on' or 'afterthought' to policy makers and commissioners, while also pointing out that the situation was better in the field of women's issues. Funders and policy makers were also seen by some RCOs as unsympathetic to single community

organisations, though some policy makers and funders emphasised that they recognised the role of single community organisations in, for example, 'building both bonding and bridging social capital' as one put it. The view that bonding capital, i.e. contacts with members of one's own nationality or ethnicity, is incompatible with bridging capital, i.e. contacts outside the national or ethnic group, is contradicted by research that analysed data from the Survey of New Refugees in the UK and found that refugees with strong bonding capital also showed strong bridging capital[17]. This is consistent with the approach of many RCOs in this research, who first build bonding capital such as social networks as a basis for fostering contacts with the wider society.

Our Shared Future, the report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion published in 2007 [18], discouraged support for single community groups except where it was clear that they met needs that could not be met by others. This may have led funders to favour organisations working with multiple nationalities. More recently, the two rounds of the UK Community Foundations New Beginnings Fund, which aimed to assist refugees and other new arrivals, prioritised groups working with people from different backgrounds. Since refugee-led organisations are more likely to be viewed as serving a single community, this may put them at a disadvantage even though many also serve people of other backgrounds and many RCO activities encourage and support engagement with the wider society.

Single community organisations face another challenge, particularly in London, where they often serve a community that is spread across borough boundaries. Some even reported helping community members from outside London on occasion. This brought challenges such as travel, knowledge of local partners and funding. Another challenge was geographically limited funding for some services: one RCO reported having to explain to community members from different parts of London why they could not use a service funded for a specific area.

RCOs and forums also felt that small organisations were at a disadvantage in competing for funding and influence. This was partly attributed to their own limitations of time, capacity and expertise in fundraising, compared to larger organisations. New requirements for charities had a greater impact on smaller organisations; one RCO cited

16 John Lyon's Charity website, http://jlc.london/jlc-extra/capacity-building/young-peoples-foundations, accessed 2018.

17 *Social networks, social capital and refugee integration*, Dr Sin Yi Cheung and Dr Jenny Phillimore, Nuffield Foundation, 2013.

18 *Our Shared Future*, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, Department of Communities and Local Government, 2007.

new information on trustees required by banks as an additional burden. RCOs and forums also felt that stakeholders did not always understand the role of small organisations. One forum reported that more mainstream refugee organisations had 'professionalised' in recent years, giving them an advantage in fundraising that was not matched by an advantage in meeting needs and empowering people. Another forum mentioned a national funder which had previously supported some RCOs but had recently shifted funding to local branches of a large national NGO. One RCO was unable to sell its interpreting services to the NHS, which preferred a larger organisation able supply more languages though at a higher cost.

Some funders recognise the capabilities of small and medium sized organisations. One sees them as best at reaching disadvantaged communities and has published several reports on issues affecting small organisations. Another has carried out research on how best to reach smaller organisations. Other initiatives and organisations, including the Small Charities Coalition and the Foundation for Social Improvement, also champion and provide support for small organisations, some of it funded by central government departments such as Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport[19]. No RCOs in the research mentioned these initiatives; it may be that they are not reaching RCOs. If so, they might learn from a closer look at RCO activities, the specific challenges they face and the role they play in delivering wider policy objectives.

Some RCOs also felt that the role of specialist organisations working with specific groups or issues were not well understood by policy makers and other stakeholders, though this was less of a problem in some areas of work, such Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

7.5 PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORKING

As noted earlier, RCOs saw partnership working as very important, citing many examples of successful partnerships. At the same time, partnership working presented challenges. This was particularly true in the case of commissioning, but partnership was a challenge in other contexts as well. To be successful, RCOs felt that partners needed to be equal, with expectations and objectives clear on both sides and that responsibilities, risks and resources allocated fairly based on each partner's contribution to the shared objectives. Some RCOs felt the greater capacity of larger organisations to engage in

partnerships, and their expertise, worked to the detriment of RCOs who lacked that capacity.

One RCO reported difficulty engaging with the police and social services in issues such as criminality and child protection, areas in which culture and unfamiliarity with UK law and practices presented problems that RCOs were endeavouring to solve. Others reported successful engagement with similar partners. Some RCOs felt that successful engagement often depended on individuals in those organisations rather than an institutional awareness of what could be gained by engaging with community organisations. Another stated that RCOs were rarely approached by partners and had to initiate contact themselves.

RCOs also reported instances in which they felt exploited by larger organisations who used their knowledge of communities in developing projects but did not involve RCOs in delivery or allocate them a proportionate share of resources and responsibilities when they were involved.

7.6 ENGAGING WITH LOCAL PLANNING

RCOs reported engaging with the development of local strategies and plans, as well as structures for addressing specific issues such as health, advice, ESOL and others. However, many felt that local decision-making and planning processes were opaque and unresponsive. Several RCOs noted that they and other civil society organisations were consulted only when plans and strategies were fully developed; others doubted the impact of their input and received no feedback. Local authorities may have multiple strategies for delivering their objectives, even if these support a single overarching plan such as the community strategy. This complexity may itself be a barrier to engagement for RCOs.

Alongside frustrations with planning and consultation, however, many RCOs reported a good relationship with their local authority and felt the local authority responded when approached, though some RCOs noted that local authorities seldom initiated contact.

Some RCOs reported success in influencing local policy and practice by working through local engagement structures and partners, often by engaging with personnel closer to front-line service delivery rather than higher level policy makers. Engagement structures in areas such as health or community safety were regarded as useful for raising and resolving issues but sometimes ineffective. Due to past frustrations, one RCO had limited its engagement to stakeholders who took the initiative in engaging with it.

19 Small Charities Coalition website, https://www.smallcharities.org.uk, accessed 2018.

Some RCOs observed that consultative bodies were dominated by larger organisations that did not always engage with them or reflect their views. Many RCOs named their local CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) as an effective channel for engagement, while others felt the voices of smaller organisations were not always heard or their contributions recognised.

Refugee forums were found to have achieved significant success. This is discussed more fully in the section on support for RCOs.

Policy makers for their part did not always get what they wanted from consultation and engagement. Some local authorities reported actively engaging with RCOs and forums.

7.7 SHORT TERM PRESSURES VERSUS THE LONG-TERM CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Asked about the impact of short term pressures on long term planning and integration, some RCOs felt that as organisations, the need to respond to short-term needs meant less time to plan for the long-term. As we have seen, short-term pressures often included the short-term nature of many grants. Those RCOs serving many new arrivals felt the pressure of meeting their immediate and urgent needs prevented them from addressing longer term issues.

At the same time, however, these and most other RCOs were focused on the long term needs and aspirations of service users, and many of their activities were designed to meet longer-term needs. Indeed, the extended nature of their engagement with many service users seemed to be a distinctive feature of RCOs. One RCO stated that responding to short-term pressures was not a problem due to its clear long-term vision for both the organisation and its service users.

There may be a lesson here for other RCOs and for support organisations: time spent developing a clear strategy may be the best way to ensure long-term viability and balance short-term pressures against long-term needs.

7.8 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RCOs reported a range of challenges in sustaining and developing their organisations and activities.

While many challenges are associated with running any organisation, some organisational challenges arose from specific external factors.

Governance, financial management and HR

One of the most frequently cited challenges was trustee training and recruitment. This may be a special challenge for RCOs, where community members may not be familiar with the role of trustees and require more training. Another was human resources, including policies, advice on specific issues and continuous professional development and training for staff and volunteers. Improving financial management was identified as a need by some RCOs.

These fundamental aspects of running an organisation were regarded as challenges even by experienced RCOs, but for new and emerging organisations this need was even greater, particularly as leaders were apt to be unfamiliar with the requirements of running a community organisation in the UK, including the environment in which they operated.

Commissioning and partnerships

Commissioning and partnerships were regarded as a challenge, but so was the need for RCOs to develop greater expertise in these areas. RCOs cited a need for better knowledge of commissioning, negotiating skills and the need to 'speak the language of commissioners'. Many RCOs cited a wide range of successful partnerships, but they also saw a need to develop their skills and capacity in this area.

Despite seeing partnership as a challenge, RCOs also showed awareness of the key elements in successful partnerships; part of the challenge may be to help prospective partners take a more constructive approach to cooperation.

ICT skills and resources

ICT, including equipment, software and digital skills was another need, particularly as many RCOs saw potential for using ICT to enhance their effectiveness, particularly in monitoring and evaluation and data collection. ICT could also help RCOs make more productive use of their existing but limited resources. Cost as well as expertise was major barrier to addressing these needs.

Strategic planning and income generation

Several RCOs mentioned the need for more time and skills to diversify their income, particularly by adopting a social enterprise approach to marketing training, consultancy, translation and other services. The need for expertise in marketing, communication and social media was also cited in this connection. One RCO needed marketing expertise to take advantage of its success in another area

of organisational development: the achievement of higher professional standards.

Understanding the local environment

Knowledge of local authorities and other local stakeholders, local services, engagement structures and planning processes was seen to be important by most RCOs. This was particularly true for new and emerging organisations. One refugee forum noted that this included knowing how to get the most out of engagement with policy makers and others. Most RCOs felt they would benefit from more information on decision-making and planning processes of local authorities and other stakeholders. One RCO believed that local authorities not recognised as having large disadvantaged communities received less funding from central government and that this had an impact on their ability to help disadvantaged groups including refugees.

KEY FINDINGS

- Grant-makers who actively engage prior to the application stage and throughout the process can help RCOs to demonstrate their capabilities and access funding

- Commissioning that recognises and rewards the contributions of RCOs can deliver better outcomes for refugees

- Initiatives to promote small organisations should work with specialist support organisations to ensure they are reaching RCOs

- Larger organisations relying on RCOs to reach refugee communities should allocate a fair share of resources to RCO partners

8. SUPPORT FOR RCOs

Effective support can help organisations surmount many of the challenges identified in the previous section. This section reviews support that is currently available and used by RCOs. It then looks at support needs identified by RCOs and their views on the role of specialist support.

8.1 HOW RCOs FIND AND USE SUPPORT

RCOs were asked to describe the support they currently received. Some general findings emerged from their responses and are discussed here.

The wide range of support used by RCOs

A striking finding of the research was the wide range of support used by RCOs. Alongside familiar sources such as local councils for voluntary service, many reported getting support from a range of other sources, including informal support from partner organisations or individuals. Some of these sources are described below.

Resourcefulness in finding support

Organisations provided evidence of being very resourceful in identifying and finding the support they needed and were prepared to take up support wherever they could find it. One small and relatively new RCO which had only recently received its first small grant, reported getting in-kind support from national campaigners, pro bono legal advice and the use of premises from a local business. Similar approaches – and successes – were described by many RCOs in the research.

Difficulties finding affordable support

Though many RCOs reported using a wide range of support, some said they found it difficult to locate the support they needed at a cost they could afford. RCOs reported that free or low-cost training is less available now, with some support organisations now charging. Though support may have decreased, a wide range of support is still available but finding out about it may be difficult.

Low take-up of available support

Despite the support needs identified by RCOs and the many forms of support they used, input from RCOs, funders and support practitioners also indicated that take-up of support by RCOs was sometimes low.

This seemed to be true particularly for smaller organisations. RCOs, even larger ones, reported that they didn't always have time to attend available training sessions, while support practitioners sometimes found that frequent reminders were needed to encourage take-up, even for sessions that RCOs had signed up for. Interviews with RCOs, particularly smaller ones who rely mainly on volunteers and have limited resources, show that RCOs must often choose between meeting immediate demands of service provision and organisational development opportunities. The user-centred approach that was evident in interviews may have been a factor, as RCOs prioritised user needs and service delivery over development goals. Achieving enough flexibility to accommodate smaller RCOs is challenge for support organisations, who also need to ensure that their own limited resources are deployed efficiently. One funder was thinking of using webinars to improve accessibility and flexibility.

8.2 SOURCES OF SUPPORT

As noted above, RCOs received support from many sources. Some is informal and pro bono, obtained from individuals or partner organisations. This section examines more formal sources of support.

Local councils for voluntary service and other general support for organisational development

A few RCOs mentioned support from the NCVO and the London Voluntary Service Council (now part of Greater London Volunteering whose functions are in turn being taken over the Hub for London). Local councils for voluntary service (CVS), however, were the main source of general support for many RCOs, providing advice, training, information, local directories, engagement with policy makers and support for commissioning, sometimes including the active coordination of consortia bids. RCOs noted that local councils for voluntary service varied a great deal from one local authority area to another, with no CVS at all in some areas. This was consistent with London Councils' *Survey on Borough Third Sector Infrastructure* which focused mainly on local councils for voluntary service in London boroughs[20]. In some areas, RCOs reported that the CVS had reduced its services or

20 *Updated Survey of Boroughs on Third Structure Infrastructure,* London Councils, 2017.

introduced charges. Others reported that CVS services were not always appropriate or accessible for them. One CVS admitted that support for smaller and emerging organisations was lacking.

Local councils for voluntary service often played a major role in facilitating civil society engagement with local government and other stakeholders, but RCOs sometimes felt that larger organisations had a disproportionate influence. In some cases, larger civil society organisations were expected to facilitate engagement by smaller organisations engaged in similar activities. It was not always clear whether this engagement was fully inclusive and accessible to RCOs.

Funders

Independent funders provide a range of development support to grantees. Several RCOs commented positively on the support provided by funders. Providing support that is linked to specific projects and the needs of those projects may be a good way of directing support where it will have an immediate impact and there is a high incentive to take it up. However, funder support is limited to organisations receiving grants. Like some support organisations, some funders also reported that RCOs and other small organisations did not always take up available provision.

Local authorities

Although local authorities frequently fund local civil society support, several RCOs also mentioned local authorities themselves as sources of support, providing training in areas such as finance, integration, parenting and countering extremism. Others reported local authority support in the form of venues, speakers and awards. Some RCOs received support from local authorities and MPs, while one reported local authority subsidies for DBS checks, now ended. One local authority provided bespoke capacity building and funding to 'back-fill' RCO staff time to enable effective participation in a review of advice and projects on signposting and volunteering. The same council also compiled information on local ESOL provision to ensure civil society organisations could signpost effectively. Other support from local authorities included training from the community safety partnership and a central database for organisations tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Quality systems and accreditation

RCOs reported using a range of quality assurance or accreditation systems. These included OISC accreditation for immigration advice, the Advice Quality Standard (AQS)

for advice, the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education Quality Mark for supplementary schools, the PQASSO quality assurance system for general organisational effectiveness and London Youth for work with young people.

Specialist support for activities and services

Many RCOs received assistance from a wide range of organisations providing support for specific activities or services. These included the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education, Advice UK, IMKAAN, Solace Women's Aid, London Councils' Violence Against Women and Girls Consortium, the Ufi Charitable Trust and ROTA (Race on the Agenda).

Specialist support for refugee organisations

RCOs also reported assistance from organisations such as the Refugee Council, which provides information on policy and other issues via its website, runs campaigns and supports advocacy through its Advocacy Network, and provides community development support for resettled refugees. It also delivers a programme of support for RCOs in London that includes fundraising workshops, an e-newsletter, listening events, workshops on grant applications, partnership and social impact assessment, networking and meet the funder events, maintaining a directory of services for refugees and providing online development resources.

Several RCOs also mentioned receiving support from the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, a pan-London organisation that supports RCOs (and migrant-led organisations), providing office space, management of partnership projects and training on research for action and influencing.

Migrants Organise delivers direct services but also provides office space and advice on organisational development for RCOs in the London borough where it is based and has now begun offering training as community organisers for migrants and refugees. This represents a new approach to supporting refugee-led initiatives, though organisations such as Citizens UK have also used community organisers to campaign on refugee issues.

Asylum Welcome in Oxford, while mainly an organisation that provides services for refugees, also helps emerging refugee community groups to organise activities and provides space for meetings. Similar refugee support organisations may play a similar role for the refugee communities they work with, much like the community development support offered by organisations such as the Refugee Council as part of the Gateway resettlement programme and the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme.

Refugee forums

Local and regional refugee forums, where they exist, play a unique and important role in supporting RCOs. Seven were interviewed for the research, including the three which facilitated interviews and focus groups with RCOs. Like other specialist support organisations, some forums also deliver services for refugees, though one expressly avoided service delivery which it saw as a potential conflict of interest since RCOs are mainly service providers. Most forums were organised as membership organisations and defined the role of members in their governance structures. Many were registered as charities and had secured funding, often from local government but also from independent funders.

Support for RCO members was a key role. Most forums provided office space for RCOs and venues for RCO activities, as well as advice and training. They also enabled RCOs to share information and experience, but the main role of refugee forums was to facilitate engagement with partners and key stakeholders such as local government. Most were funded by local government to engage with refugee communities and provide support for their organisations and community activities.

The research found considerable evidence of the effectiveness of such forums in shaping local services. Some successes have already been noted in the section on influencing policy and practice. One regional forum reported extensive work by its Stronger Families Working Group, which aimed to influence policy and practice to prevent family breakdown and safeguarding interventions, a key issue for many RCOs. Working Group activities included dialogue between RCOs and social workers, health visitors and other practitioners to develop key messages that RCOs could deliver to their members. It also delivered training for social workers on working with parents who were refugees and people seeking asylum. Training sessions for university social work students were another activity aimed at influencing social work practice and had been included in the annual syllabus. The forum cited outcomes such as a pilot 'Parenting in the UK' session for refugee and asylum-seeking parents, as well as positive feedback from participants in training sessions for practitioners and students.

As this research has found, emerging RCOs often benefit from specialist support by organisations who understand the challenges facing refugees as well as the needs of community leaders who may have clear ideas about what they want to do but lack the knowledge of how to accomplish this in the unfamiliar environment of the UK. Local RCOs forums can provide this support for emerging

RCOs but also facilitate access to mainstream support and engage with the local partners that are so important to RCOs. As noted above, many of the local and regional forums in this research can claim significant successes, and some have sought to share their experiences with other forums.

8.3 THE ROLE OF SPECIALIST SUPPORT

Asked to reflect on the role of specialist support, RCOs identified functions that could be best performed by specialist organisations.

Supporting advocacy and engaging RCOs in advocacy work on national policy

RCOs were keen to use their experience and knowledge to inform national policies. Given that many of these policies are specific to people seeking asylum and refugees, specialist organisations had a key role to play, working with directly with RCOs or through local forums. Specialist national refugee organisations brought policy and advocacy expertise as well as access to policy makers, while RCOs could contribute evidence from their communities and as well as their own voice as equal partners in national advocacy. National campaigning organisations working with RCOs through local and regional forums was cited by some RCOs and refugee forums as an effective model. RCOs cited some specific issues on which they sought help from national organisations. These included difficulties opening bank accounts, delays in family reunion and the need for a national refugee integration service. One forum noted that reporting volunteering as 'volunteer work' was often misinterpreted by asylum case owners as work, prejudicing asylum claims.

Advocate on behalf of RCOs and their work with refugee communities

RCOs felt strongly that specialist refugee organisations could help policy-makers, funders and other stakeholders to understand and value the role played by RCOs, helping them to form effective partnerships, inform policy and secure funding and other support to deliver their outcomes.

Help RCOs to advocate at local level

Advocacy at local level was also important to RCOs, as they sought to influence local policies and services. Local forums were viewed as an effective means of supporting advocacy, but national support organisations could play a role in supporting forums or individual RCOs in areas with no forum but where the national organisation had a local presence.

Filter and communicate information on policy, support, funding and other issues relevant to RCOs

Specialist support organisations could play a role in providing information tailored to the needs of RCOs. This was a role for both local and national specialist support, providing local and national information respectively.

Provide support to small and emerging RCOs, including access to small grants and premises

This role was played mainly by local and regional forums, and by local resettlement teams in the case of national resettlement programmes, or in some cases by local refugee assisting organisations. Emerging RCOs face unique challenges, as new arrivals seek to empower community members but need support in achieving their aims in an unfamiliar environment and often a new language. Help may be best provided by specialist support that can facilitate access to mainstream support and key partnerships.

Lead and support partnerships and commissioning involving refugees and/or refugee organisations

Many RCOs saw this as a role for larger specialist refugee organisations and cited the example of an advice partnership in a London borough. Funding schemes targeting refugees such as a recent European Social Fund employment programme were cited as opportunities for such leadership. Another RCO suggested that city-level coordination of refugee-assisting organisations to deliver a more effective service for refugees in London could be led by a pan-London specialist organisation.

Provide tailored support for RCOs on governance, trustees, finance and fundraising

Many RCOs also suggested that training and other support on issues of organisational development could be more effective when delivered from the perspective of a specialist refugee organisation with an understanding of the specific challenges faced by RCOs. Such specialist support would also offer opportunities for networking and peer learning with other RCOs.

Facilitate communication and sharing of experience among local and regional refugee forums

Local forums are an important and often effective means of supporting RCOs, particularly emerging and smaller organisations. Forums would benefit from sharing experiences with other forums that could enable them to introduce successful initiatives in their areas.

8.4 SPECIALIST SUPPORT AND *THE WAY AHEAD*

The Way Ahead sets out a vision for civil society and civil society support in London. It identifies five functions of specialist support, some of which are shared with local support:

- Triage and connect
- Catalyst for action and identifying emerging needs
- Develop standard resources/customise and deliver locally
- Campaign and influence regionally and locally
- Catalyst to drive quality and consistency of local support[21]

The research found many examples of specialist support delivering these functions, and a desire by RCOs for specialist support in these areas.

Local and regional forums and other specialist support performed triage and connect, connecting RCOs with appropriate support. Local specialist support was also a catalyst for action and identifying emerging needs. Local forums were seen to have identified needs and co-produced solutions with local stakeholders.

Developing standard resources was also a role played by specialist support at both local and national level. One local forum developed a guide to setting up an RCO and the Refugee Council produced a new online organisational assessment tool for RCOs[22].

Multiple structures exist that support national campaigning by RCOs and other refugee organisations, including Asylum Matters, Cities of Sanctuary, Migrant Voice, Citizens UK, the Migrants Rights Network and the Refugee Council's Advocacy Network.

The experience of specialist support, and of RCOs themselves, can serve as a catalyst to drive quality and consistency of local support both by forging partnerships with other local support and by sharing the experiences of other specialist support organisations, especially local refugee forums. Past examples of specialist and generic support cooperating to improve access and quality include *Becoming More Effective: An Introduction to Monitoring*

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21 *The Way Ahead*, Civil Society at the Heart of London, London Funders, 2015.

22 Refugee Council website, https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/RCO_resources, accessed 2018.

and Evaluation for Refugee Community Organisations[23], *Working with Refugee Community Organisations: A Guide for Local Infrastructure Organisations*[24] and *More Responsive Public Services? A Guide to Commissioning Refugee Community Organisations*[25]. The scope of this research did not permit summarising the key messages of these resources, but some have informed this research and may be of use to support organisations and commissioners as well as RCOs.

The findings of the research, and the activities of specialist refugee support, are thus consistent with the specialist functions identified in *The Way Ahead* and offer suggestions on how to develop those roles.

KEY FINDINGS

- RCOs identified clear roles for specialist support organisations, particularly in campaigning and advocating on behalf of RCOs
- Some refugee forums suggested that an effective model for involving RCOs in campaigning would be for national support organisations to work with local and regional forums
- Specialist support has a key role to play in assisting new and emerging RCOs and helping them to access generic support
- Refugee forums are an effective way to deliver specialist support for RCOs

23 *Becoming More Effective: An Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation for Refugee Community Organisations*, Charities Evaluation Service and the Refugee Council, 2008.

24 *Working with Refugee Community Organisations: A Guide for Local Infrastructure Organisations*, Charities Evaluation Service, Charities Evaluation Service and the Refugee Council, 2008.

25 *More Responsive Public Services? A Guide to Commissioning Refugee Community Organisations*, John Perry and A. Azim El-Hassan, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and HACT, 2008.

9. RCOs, NATIONAL POLICY AND LOCAL PLANNING

As noted above, RCOs contribute to many specific objectives of the Mayor of London's Social Integration and relevant local authority strategies. This section briefly explores how RCO activities are also relevant to national policies and identifies opportunities for strengthening RCO involvement in local planning.

9.1 NATIONAL POLICY AND RCOs

The research identified several national policies that are relevant to RCOs and integration. Some support key aspects of integration, while others have potential to help RCOs. Policy makers, civil society support organisations and RCOs themselves should be aware of these opportunities.

The Integrated Communities Strategy is now being developed following consultation on the green paper published in March 2018. The green paper included objectives in areas such as integration support refugee, education and young people, English proficiency through community-based learning, economic opportunity, empowering women and hate crime reporting. As we have seen, RCOs are active in all these areas; their role should be recognised in developing and delivering the strategy.

As part of the Integrated Communities Strategy, the government plans to launch an expanded Community-Based English Language programme, based on the experience of six current providers. The research identified several RCOs that took part in the programme. The expanded programme could support RCO efforts to help community members learn English and benefit from RCOs' ability to motivate and build confidence to take up mainstream ESOL provision.

The Controlling Migration Fund will also support the new Integrated Communities Strategy. One local authority reported using a grant from the fund to improve signposting among civil society and statutory services.

Although the local authority reported that some organisations resisted signposting, the research found that many RCOs saw signposting as an opportunity to help service users meet other needs and actively sought opportunities to engage and cooperate with other services.

Some RCOs reported received grants from the government's Building a Stronger Britain Together programme which. Although controversial for some due to its association with the Counter-Extremism Strategy, the fund enabled RCOs to deliver desired outcomes for their communities.

The government recently published its *Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone*[26]. The strategy aims to strengthen the social sector to which RCOs belong, as well as improve outcomes for individuals in many areas where RCOs are active such reducing isolation, family support, digital competence and young people.

A new government guidance on the Social Value Act has just been issued[27]. The Act requires public authorities to consider social value in commissioning services. Examples of social value include collaboration with the voluntary and community sector, user involvement in service development and opportunities for small voluntary, community and social enterprises. The Act has the potential to increase RCO involvement in services that are related to their own activities in areas such as health and well-being, mental health, employment and digital skills.

A review of investment in voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations by the Department of Health, NHS England, Public Health England and representatives of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) found that civil society made significant contributions to health and social care outcomes as well

26 *Civil Society Strategy*, Cabinet Office (2018)

27 *The Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012, An introductory guide for commissioners and policymakers*, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2018)

as strengthening the evidence base[28]. However, the report also found that the role of the VCSE in health and social care was more successful in some places. Full inclusion in planning, goal-setting and risk management was just as important as funding in realising this potential.

9.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY AND RCOs

Local authorities see civil society organisations as key partners. This was clear from interviews and a limited survey of local government strategy documents. The research identified several developments aimed at strengthening this partnership and delivering better local services and outcomes. It also identified some suggestions for enhancing these approaches.

Co-production, place-based and systems approaches

All local authorities consulted for the research had adopted co-production, defined as working from the outset with communities and civil society to set priorities and plan delivery. Some local authorities were also adopting place-based or systems approaches to planning and service development. These approaches recognise that multiple factors need to be addressed in finding solutions for disadvantaged individuals, and that multiple actors have a role to play in working together to achieve positive change.

This research found abundant evidence that RCOs bring about outcomes that contribute to achieving wider policy objectives as measured by key indicators. Much that is characteristic of their approach – recognising and addressing the multiple factors behind disadvantage, working with relevant partners and involving users in assessing and developing services – strongly suggest that RCOs often apply a systems approach in their own work.

Mapping civil society

The research found efforts to map local civil society and improve engagement with local organisations. One local authority was trying find community organisations that it was not previously in contact with. Another had held a listening event attended by a wide range of civil society organisations to inform its new voluntary sector strategy. In one area, the local council for voluntary services had taken the lead in mapping local civil society, using a

methodology similarly to that used by the NCVO in its Civil Society Almanac[29]. NESTA recently employed a mapping methodology to capture 'below the radar' organisations, a category to which many small, unregistered RCOs belong[30].

Mappings provide a useful overview of the number, size and activities of civil society organisations in an area and serve as a useful resource for policy makers in implementing co-production and other approaches that engage civil society partners. They can help indicate which civil society organisations can provide information about communities, including refugees, and deliver key outcomes for them.

Local authority support for RCOs and other civil society organisations

In addition to funding civil society, local authorities also sought other ways to support RCOs and other civil society organisations. RCOs themselves reported a range of support from local authorities, as explored in more detail in the section on RCO support.

9.3 STRENGTHENING RCO ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL PLANNING

As noted in the section on challenges for RCOs, many felt they had limited influence on planning and welcomed new initiatives such as co-production and systems approaches. In addition to recognising these opportunities, the research also suggested measures by local authorities and others that could further enhance new approaches to planning.

RCOs and the evidence base for local strategies

Local planners use a wide range of statistical, administrative and other data in developing local priorities and plans. Increasingly, this is shared with other stakeholders. Though planners also gather information from RCOs and other civil society organisations, the research shows there is potential to make better use of evidence from RCOs. The Greater London Authority is exploring ways to make better use of civil society data to fill gaps in the evidence base.

Local strategies frequently use statistical data to identify disadvantaged groups and adopt interventions to reduce those disadvantages. Not all members of such groups will be disadvantaged; effective action for groups necessitates identifying individuals, understanding the factors that cause them to be disadvantaged and delivering effective interventions to produce better outcomes for them.

28 *Joint review of partnerships and investment in voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in the health and care sector*, Department of Health, NHS England, Public Health England and representatives of the VCSE sector, 2016.

29 *Civil Society Almanac 2017*, NCVO, https://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac17/methodology-8/, accessed 2018.

30 *Mining the Grant-Makers*, David Kane, NESTA, 2015.

The distinctive assets of RCOs identified earlier can help meet all these requirements:

- **Reach** enables RCOs to identify and engage disadvantaged individuals
- **Insight** helps RCOs to understand the factors contributing to disadvantage
- **Solutions** delivered by RCOs can reduce the disadvantages experienced by individuals

As we have seen, RCOs have information about their users, interventions and outcomes which could help planners to develop more effective strategies.

Proactive communication of the evidence base

Local authorities often share much of the local evidence base. However, the ability of RCOs and other civil society organisations to contribute would be enhanced if planners proactively communicated relevant evidence and identified gaps which civil society could fill.

Aligning monitoring data with the evidence needed by planners

Local authorities and other public bodies collect data from grantees but there is little evidence this is used in planning. Ongoing collection of data on services can provide cost-effective monitoring of progress against local strategies as well as inform future policy development.

Support for RCOs and other small organisations to engage in planning

Policy makers and planning bodies such as user-led groups should devise mechanisms that minimise demands on RCOs and other small organisations with limited capacity. One option might be direct communication with RCOs rather than travel to time-consuming meetings where there is limited opportunity to contribute. Specifying information to be brought to meetings might also be helpful. Both local authorities and independent funders should recognise that in addition to delivering outcomes for service users, RCOs also help beneficiaries by influencing local policy and practice.

Building capacity for data collection and analysis

Many RCOs reported using CRM systems to record data. A specialist support organisation reported providing support for data collection and analysis and cooperating with policy makers. Both local and specialist support such as ICT should prioritise capacity for data collection and analysis to enable contributions to local planning. Funders

need to recognise that data collection has a cost but can contribute to benefits resulting from better policies.

> **KEY FINDINGS**
>
> - RCOs contribute to and can benefit from key national policies
> - Co-production, place-based planning and systems approaches can enable civil society to shape better local policies and services – additional measures may further enhance these approaches
> - RCOs can contribute to the local evidence base but may need help from support organisations, funders and planners

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research has identified some key findings about RCOs:

- RCOs see integration as a key role and encourage refugees to engage with the wider community and UK society

- RCOs are often cost-effective, professional organisations and deliver outcomes that are directly relevant to objectives in many policy areas including health and well-being, English proficiency, employment, education, cohesion, civic participation, community safety and stronger families

- RCOs display a holistic, systems-based approach by addressing multiple factors in oveRCOming disadvantage and involving partner organisations to achieve results

- RCOs use key enablers such as English proficiency and volunteering to foster independence, self-reliance and engagement with wider society

- RCOs reach people that others do not

The research also examined the challenges faced by RCOs, the potential for taking more account of RCO evidence and outcomes in local policy development and how civil society support and other measures can help RCOs sustain and develop their activities.

This section presents a set of recommendations for funders, commissioners, policy makers, support organisations and RCOs themselves. The recommendations aim to help RCOs play an even stronger role in successful settlement and integration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS AND COMMISSIONERS

The research identified access to funding as a key challenge for RCOs, and explored barriers such as language, unfamiliarity with systems and funding processes and the pressures on RCO leaders as they cope with the personal challenges of settling in the UK as well as helping refugee community members who may face unique sets of challenges. It also identified many new grant-making practices that can make funding more accessible to RCOs and other community organisations. Commissioning is an important source of funding for some RCOs but also presents challenges. The following recommendations are for funders and commissioners, including independent trusts and foundations and statutory funders such as Government and local authorities:

Adopt accessible grant-making processes and assess the impact on RCOs

Some independent funders and local authorities have developed grant-making processes involving pre-application stages, continuous engagement and negotiated outcomes that can help oveRCOme barriers to funding that may be experienced by RCOs. Funders should review access to funding by RCOs, assess the impact of their processes on refugee-led organisations and adjust processes to ensure funding streams are accessible.

Consider grant-funding as an alternative to commissioning some services

There is increasing recognition that grant-funding is more effective at realising the contributions of RCOs and other small organisations. Commissioners should consider evidence on the benefits of grants as an alternative to commissioning.

Ensure that commissioning is viable for RCOs and other small organisations

RCOs and other small organisations often deliver outcomes for specific communities that are essential to providing effective services for all. Commissioning, however, often requires them to join consortia led by larger organisations. Commissioners should ensure equitable allocation of risks and resources and avoid payment in arrears which are difficult for RCOs and other small organisations.

Include grants for RCOs in funding programmes for refugees

There is a strong case for funding programmes to support the many refugees who are not assisted by resettlement programmes. Where specific finding streams exist, such programmes should ensure that RCOs receive a proportionate share of funding by recognising their unique assets.

Extend capacity-building to non-grantees

Funders increasingly offer capacity-building to grantees who may not always be able to take up this support. Funders should consider offering this support to non-grantees as well, to ensure that available resources are fully utilised while extending support to more organisations.

Support the capacity of RCOs to gather evidence and engage with local planning

The potential for data from grant monitoring to inform policy should be investigated and realised. At the same time, monitoring requirements should be proportional to the investment and activities to be delivered.

Recommendations for local and other mainstream civil society support

Local civil society support such as councils for voluntary service are key partners for many RCOs and for local policy makers, providing development support for civil society organisations and facilitating engagement with local planning. The research identifies the following recommendations for local support.

Ensure effective support is in place for small and emerging RCOs

The research identified the need for effective, and affordable, support for small and emerging RCOs and suggested that this was a role for specialist support organisations including refugee forums. Local civil society support should work with specialist support, including refugee forums and the agencies responsible for refugee

resettlement programmes, to help ensure that RCOs can use mainstream support and engage with local planning.

Contribute to a comprehensive mapping of local civil society

Local civil society organisations should ensure comprehensive mapping of civil society and work with specialist civil society support for refugees to ensure that RCOs are included on mapping exercises.

Build the capacity of RCOs and other community organisations to collect data

Co-production, place-based and systems approaches can enable RCOs and other civil society organisations to help shape local policy and services by supplementing the evidence base compiled by local planners. Local support should build capacity for data collection to help RCOs inform planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIALIST CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT FOR RCOs

A key aim of the research was to identify the role of specialist civil society support for RCOs. The following recommendations are directed at both local and national specialist support and advocate a close partnership between national and local specialist support.

Provide support for small and emerging RCOs

New and emerging RCOs can benefit from specialist support that can help RCO leaders who may face specific challenges, including learning English, getting to know how things work in the UK and the personal challenges of the asylum process, settlement and integration. Refugee forums are the most common form of support, but local refugee organisations and national organisations operating locally could also support small and emerging RCOs. Support for small and emerging organisations should focus on identifying high-priority but realistic aims, then tailoring support to achieve these.

Support refugee forums and facilitate the sharing of good practice

Refugee forums can be very effective in providing specialist support for RCOs. Individual forums could benefit from greater sharing of experience and practice

with other forums. They could also benefit from stronger partnerships with national specialist support. Any national support should be developed in partnership with refugee forums and other local specialist support.

Involve RCOs in national advocacy work

Many RCOs expressed an interest in contributing their experience of national asylum and refugee policy to advocacy work at national level, while other were more focused on influencing local stakeholders. National specialist organisations should take steps to enable RCOs to contribute to their advocacy work by helping to set priorities, contribute evidence and speaking directly to policy makers. Working in partnership with local and regional refugee forums should be a key element in national advocacy.

Raise awareness of RCOs to policy makers, funders, civil society support, public services and other stakeholders

Policy makers, funders and other stakeholders need to be more aware of refugee-led organisations and their contributions to integration. Increasing the awareness of these stakeholders is an important role for national organisations who can play a key role in influencing policy makers, funders and others. National organisations could also engage with other initiatives that can help RCOs; examples include the campaign for small organisations and policy on supplementary education.

Identify specialist needs and ensure access to mainstream support

The research identified some clear roles for specialist support but there may be others, including specialist resources. The need for other specialist tools should be assessed and met.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The research shows that RCOs and policy makers share the same broad aims in many areas of government policy, and that RCOs deliver important outcomes for their communities. These outcomes can contribute to national policy objectives. To support these outcomes, policy makers should:

Recognise the contributions of RCOs when developing refugee policies

RCOs deliver outcomes for their communities in many areas, including health and well-being, employment, civic participation, social cohesion, education, family support and community safety. Policy makers can help achieve policy objectives by including measures that support RCOs to deliver key outcomes.

Invest in RCO contributions to social policy objectives linked to integration

RCOs are active in supporting refugees to integrate and delivering key outcomes the Government desires. Investment in their activities, and those of other civil society organisations, can help achieve wider social policy objectives and promote refugee integration. RCO contributions to social value should also be recognised.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The local environment is key to most RCOs, though many operate across local authority boundaries, which is itself a challenge. Co-production, place-based funding and systems approaches can help ensure that RCO evidence and activities contribute to effective local planning. The following recommendations are intended to help local authorities, combined authorities and the Greater London Authority ensure that RCOs can use their unique assets to help achieve local policy objectives.

Provide small grants for RCOs in the early stages of development

Small grants are important to RCOs in the early stages of development. Local authorities should adopt this approach to support the development of new and emerging RCOs who may be working with new communities, developing innovative practice or addressing unmet needs.

Develop co-production, place-based and systems approaches to planning

There is potential for enhancing the involvement of RCOs in local planning and local authorities should continue to implement and improve these approaches to ensure that RCOs are involved and their contributions to achieving key objectives are recognised. Local authorities should also consider measures to help RCOs and other smaller organisations to take part in planning and delivering local strategies, including civil society mapping and support other than funding.

Utilise RCO evidence in local planning

RCO and other civil society data can strengthen the local evidence base. Local authorities should adopt the suggestions identified, including proactive communication of existing evidence and gaps, aligning grant monitoring data to planning needs, more accessible planning mechanisms and support for data collection.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RCOs

The focus of this research has been on the achievements of RCOs and their relevance to key stakeholders. However, it also identified some steps that RCOs could take to enhance their impact and sustainability.

Engage with local support organisations and planning processes

Co-production, place-based funding and systems approaches are opportunities for RCOs to enhance their own effectiveness and impact. RCOs should engage with these processes wherever possible and communicate to funders the need to support these activities as well as services.

Develop the capacity to gather data and other evidence

RCOs should take advantage of opportunities for building their capacity to capture data and other evidence from their services and inform local planning. They should also communicate this need to funders and highlight the benefits it could bring to service users.

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ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED FOR THE RESEARCH

REFUGEE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS
London

Derman – For the Well-being of the Turkish
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Eritrean Community Centre.................................... Habte Hagos
Yohannes Sibhatu

Ethiopian Women's Empowerment ....Senait Eyob Shigute

Harrow Association of Somali
Voluntary Organisations (HASVO).....Cabdulqadir Mohamed Afey
Yusuf Yusuf

IMECE Women's Centre .... Deniz Ugur

Iranian Community Association........................... Kaveh Kalentari

Iraqi Welfare Association.......................................Emad Al-Ebadi

Kurdish and Middle Eastern
Women's Organisation (KMEWO).......................... Sawsan Salim

Out and Proud African LGBTI .... Abbey Kiwanuka

Paiwand... Farid Mall
Emily Beckwith
Kate Duffy
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Refugee Women's Association .... Simin Azimi

Shpresa Programme ....Ljuljeta Nuzi

Sudanese Supplementary School......................Fatih Abu-Median
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Ahmed Bedri

TWAN (Tamil Welfare Association Newham)......................V. Jana

Vietnamese Mental Health Services............................. Jack Shieh

Manchester

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Greater Manchester ....Dr. Chefena Hailemariam

MaCO (Manchester Congolese Organisation)...... Angel N. Kaleta

United Somali Bravanese
Community of Manchester .... Mohamed Sheekh

SASCA (Somali Adult Social Care Agency)....... Ahmed Mohamed

Zimbabwe Women's Organisation...................Tendayi Madzunzu

North East

Creative Minds.. Ramatoulie Saidykhan

IPC (Investing in People and Culture).............. Larry Amadi-Emina

New Hope North East ....Elizabeth Sunduzwayo

Peace of Mind..Sara Muzuffar

RASSA (Refugee and Asylum
Seekers Support Organisation) .... Tina Pemu

Straightforward .... Latifa Shomari

Wellness First .... Asma Ahmed

Women Can Do It..Ebtisam Elswayef
Elham Ahmed
Eman Aboubaid

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Waha Community Centre .... Dr. Bilal El-Dhuwaib
Dr. Sa'ad Al-Asali

Syrian community in Sheffield .... Ahmad Tayseer Al Talab
Amer Anabo
Hamdaalha Abdo
Raghad Al Shimali

Karen Community in Sheffield .... Htoo ku Hsarsay
Win Cho Toe

Oxford

Syrian community in Oxford.....................................Hadi Al Nuri

East Timorese community in Oxford....................Acacio Marques

REFUGEE FORUMS

Hackney Refugee Forum .... Ali Aksoy

Islington Refugee Forum ....Harbi Farah

Leeds Refugee Forum.. Ali Mahgoub

MRSN (Manchester Refugee Support Network) .... Belay Kahsay

Regional Refugee Forum North East................. Georgina Fletcher
Herbert Dirahu

Sheffield Gateway Refugee Communities Forum........Akoi Bazzie

Southwark Refugee Communities Forum ....David Reid
Pauline Nandoo

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CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS
Specialist support for refugee organisations

Asylum Welcome .... Kate Smart
Almas Farsi

Evelyn Oldfield Unit... Mulat Haregot

Migrants Organise .... Zrinka Bralo

Refugee Council .... Ezechias Ngendahayo
Akoi Bazzie
Frowynke Siegers
Helen Johnson
Alem Belayeneh
Andrew Lawton
Lisa Doyle
Kama Petruczenko

Specialist support for specific purposes

Advice UK... Chilli Reid
Enrique Saenz

Consultant, formerly of
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Locality .... Alexia Bentley

Superhighways .... Kate White

National Resource Centre for
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MACC .... Mike Wild

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Middlesbrough City Council....................................Shahda Khan

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OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

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APPENDIX A:
THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S
SOCIAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY

The domains, themes and indictors of All of Us, the Mayor's Social Integration in London, reproduced here. Outcomes delivered by RCOs clearly contribute to positive change in themes such as isolation, political participation, volunteering, employment, education, digital literacy, English proficiency and sense of belonging.

DOMAIN	THEME	INDICATORS
Relationships	Diverse relationships	• Proportion who say their friends are all the same age • Proportion who say their friends are all the same race • Proportion who say their friends have the same educational level • Proportion who say their friends have the same income level
	Social mixing	• Proportion who agree that this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on
	Hate crime	• Hate crimes per 1000 people
	Social isolation	• Proportion of people that do not have a spouse or partner, family member or friend to rely on if they have a serious problem
	Social trust	• Proportion who agree that people in their neighbourhood can be trusted
Participation	Political participation	• Local electoral registration rate for local population
	Volunteering	• Proportion of adults who have done any voluntary work in last 12 months
	Associational membership	• Proportion of adults who are a member of a political, voluntary, professional or recreational organisation
Equality	Employment rate gap	• Employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled adults • Employment rate gap between white ethnic group and ethnic group with lowest employment rate
	Educational attainment	• Proportion of pupils obtaining 5+ GCSEs A*-C, including English and Maths
	Childcare uptake	• Uptake of 2-year-old free early education entitlement
	Housing affordability	• Proportion of people in households spending more than a third of their income on housing
	Financial resilience	• Proportion of people in families with savings of less than £1500
	Digital literacy	• Proportion of adults who have not used the internet in the last 3 months
	English proficiency	• Proportion of those who speak a language other than English at home who report language problems leading to difficulty in education or keeping/finding employment
	Citizenship	• Proportion of non-national population who have attended a citizenship ceremony
Outcome	Feeling of belonging	• Proportion who agree or strongly agree that they feel they belong to their neighbourhood
	Positive experience of London	• Proportion who agree that London is a good place to live

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SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES

REFUGEE
COUNCIL

The Refugee Council is one of the leading charities in the UK working with people seeking asylum and refugees.

As a human rights charity, independent of government, we work to ensure that refugees are given the protection they need, that they are treated with respect and understanding, and that they have the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as other members of our society.

This report can be downloaded at
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk