

New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022

Policy Development

This paper seeks approval for the refreshed strategy New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 and the continued involvement of COSLA in the delivery and implementation of the strategy.

Summary and Recommendations

In March 2017, the Community Wellbeing Executive Group agreed that COSLA would participate in the refreshing of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy. This paper updates the Board on the progress made, submits the new strategy for final approval and proposes COSLA's continued involvement in the delivery and implementation of the strategy.

The Board is invited to:

- i. Note the progress that has been made in refreshing the New Scots Strategy, in partnership with Scottish Government and Scottish Refugee Council, recognising in particular the strength of the engagement undertaken;
- ii. Note the additions to the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 as outlined in paragraphs 7 to 10;
- iii. Agree the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 as at Appendix 1, subject to minor changes as recommended by COSLA Officers; and
- iv. Agree to COSLA's continued participation in the delivery and implementation of the New Scots Strategy as outlined in paragraphs 10 to 12.

References

Previous reports covering New Scots:

- Community Wellbeing Executive Group March 2017 – New Scots Strategy: Refugee Integration

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New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022

Policy Development

1. This paper seeks support for the refreshed strategy New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

Current Context

2. The New Scots strategy is led in partnership by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council. In March 2017, the Community Wellbeing Executive Group received an update on the progress of the delivery of the New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities Strategy 2014-2017. A [final report](#) was published at the end of March 2017 setting out the progress made with the delivery of this first strategy.
3. At the same meeting of the Executive Group, it was agreed that COSLA would continue to work in partnership with colleagues from Scottish Government and Scottish Refugee Council to develop a refreshed New Scots strategy.
4. Partners have been working together to consider how the new strategy can reflect the changed landscape of refugee resettlement across Scotland over the last two years so that it truly becomes a strategy for the whole of Scotland. This work also takes cognisance of extensive engagement that took place with partners across Scotland during the summer 2017.
5. Over 90 events were held across Scotland by a wide range of stakeholders including local authorities, public sector service providers, community groups and national charities. Over 2,000 people participated in the engagement including 700 refugees and asylum seekers. Further details can be found in Annex A of Appendix 1.
6. In order to build on this engagement work, it has been agreed that Scottish Government will commission in-depth analysis of the feedback that was received. This will be published in 2018.

What is changing?

7. The refreshed New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 is at Appendix 1 of this report. The new strategy follows a similar format to the previous strategy but with some notable additions.
8. The purpose and vision for the strategy remain similar to the previous iteration of the strategy. However, four overarching outcomes have been introduced to give focus to the strategy and ensure that the thematic areas are working together towards common outcomes and avoiding duplication of effort.
9. The New Scots vision is *"For a welcoming Scotland where refugees and asylum seekers are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive"*. The overarching outcomes to deliver on this vision are as follows:
 - 1 Refugees and asylum seekers live in safe, welcoming and cohesive communities and are able to build social connections.
 - 2 Refugees and asylum seekers understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements and are able to exercise them to pursue full and independent lives.

- 3 Refugees and asylum seekers are able to access well-coordinated services which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
 - 4 Policy, strategic planning and legislation which have an impact on refugees and asylum seekers are informed by their rights, needs and aspirations.
10. The strategy will be delivered across seven distinct themes, with Sub Groups delivering on key objectives and actions under each theme. While six of these themes mirror those that existed under the previous strategy, a new distinct theme of language has also been introduced. Access to learning English language was a recurring theme from the engagement, with refugees and asylum seekers wanting to improve their language skills. For some this is so they can improve their access to employment but it is also the key to understanding essential information about living in Scotland and being able to build social connections.
11. The strategy's Steering Group (comprising lead officers from COSLA, Scottish Government and Scottish Refugee Council) has also proposed the establishment of a New Scots Leadership Board. The Leadership Board will bring together the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, the COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing, the Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council and the Chair of the New Scots Core Group (the Core Group involves the chairs of each of the thematic groups and is chaired by Dr Alison Strang of Queen Margaret University).
12. The Leadership Board will meet at least annually during the strategy implementation and may choose to meet more frequently. The purpose of the Board will be to oversee the direction of the strategy and to ensure that a collaborative approach is taken to tackle issues which may impact refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland. Part of the role of the Board will be to secure key partners' commitment to New Scots at the highest level and involve them in the work of the Board as appropriate.

Proposed COSLA Position

13. It is proposed that COSLA approves the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 as at Appendix 1. In addition, it is proposed that COSLA remains an active partner in the delivery and implementation of the strategy: as a participant on the Leadership Board (as detailed in paragraphs 11 and 12), on the Steering Group and on the Core Group and thematic groups. This will continue to include the co-chairing of two of the groups, namely those focused on housing and the needs of asylum seekers.
14. Members should note that if the strategy is approved by COSLA and Scottish Ministers it will be launched in early January 2018.

Summary and Recommendations

15. Scottish local authorities have been playing a central role in resettling and integrating refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland's communities. The first New Scots strategy provided a useful framework for the expansion of refugee resettlement across Scotland, learning from the long-standing experience of Glasgow, and of other receiving local authority areas. The refreshed New Scots Strategy will continue to work with a wide range of partners in extending a welcome to refugees and asylum seekers with a model that ensures people are able to rebuild their lives from the day that they arrive in Scotland.
16. The Board is invited to:
- i. Note the progress that has been made in refreshing the New Scots Strategy, in partnership with Scottish Government and Scottish Refugee Council, recognising in particular the strength of the engagement undertaken;

- ii. Note the additions to the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 as outlined in paragraphs 7 to 10;
- iii. Agree the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 as at Appendix 1, subject to minor changes as recommended by COSLA Officers; and
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