

## **New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: Year One Report**

### **Summary and Recommendations**

In December 2017, the Community Wellbeing Board approved the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022 and agreed that COSLA would participate in the implementation and delivery of the Strategy. This paper updates the Board on the progress made over the first year of implementation.

The Board is invited to:

- i. Note the progress that has been made in the implementation of the New Scots Strategy, in partnership with Scottish Government and Scottish Refugee Council;
- ii. Approve the draft New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: Year One Report attached at Appendix 1; and
- iii. Endorse COSLAs ongoing commitment to support the implementation and delivery of the New Scots strategy.

### **References**

Previous reports on New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy:

- December 2017 Community Wellbeing Board Item 10 - New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022

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## **New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: Year One Report**

### **Purpose**

1. This report asks the Board to approve the draft New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: Year One Report and endorse COSLA's ongoing work to support the work of the strategy.

### **Current COSLA Position**

2. In December 2017, the Community Wellbeing Board approved the publication of the [second New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#) which runs from 2018-2022. The first strategy ran from 2014 to 2017. The new strategy was launched in January 2018 and is led in partnership by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council.
3. Partners have been working together to establish structures which have built on those that were developed under the first strategy, while a number of thematic working groups have been developing action plans for the years ahead. There are a wide range of partners involved in each thematic group, including representatives from local authorities and COSLA.
4. COSLA officers co-chairs two thematic groups (Needs of Asylum Seekers and Housing), are represented on each of the other thematic groups, and on the strategy's steering group. In addition, COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson is a member of the New Scots Leadership Board, along with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and the Chief Executive of Scottish Refugee Council.

### **What has been achieved?**

5. The first year of the strategy has seen significant work to respond to emerging issues as well as progressing actions set out in the strategy. Key achievements have included the following:
  - i. In early 2018, there were numerous reports from asylum seeking students that they were being prevented from accessing courses, or continuing their studies, because of changes to immigration bail which allowed study restrictions to be applied as part of bail conditions. Following discussion to identify the issue and significant lobbying of the Home Office, Home Office guidelines have been reissued clarifying when bail conditions should be applied. The Home Office has also clarified with local colleges and universities that study restrictions should not be routinely applied to asylum seekers.
  - ii. In July 2018, the asylum accommodation contractor in Glasgow announced plans to begin evicting people who had an asylum claim refused and their asylum support from the Home Office terminated. A number of New Scots partners were involved in the Glasgow City Council Taskforce on Asylum which was established in response. A significant amount of work has been undertaken by partners to ensure that those facing evictions were receiving the support and advocacy they needed, as well as to ensure that partners fully understood the process and legal positions of all involved. There has also been an improvement in data sharing amongst service providers on the back of this work, while the Taskforce made a number of recommendations for further improvements in policy and practice in its final report which will be published in March 2019.

- iii. A new online learning module to help primary teachers, and teaching assistants to improve their professional knowledge and confidence in supporting bilingual learners was developed and launched in August 2018. The module was developed by Education Scotland, SCILT and Glasgow City Council. This is the first in a series of online learning resources for people working with bilingual children.
6. The draft End of Year Report at Appendix 1 sets out the detail of what has been achieved by partners during the last year.
7. It is important to also recognise that there are challenges to delivering the strategy. These include limitations around dealing with reserved matters (which include asylum and immigration policy as well as policies that affect refugees such as the implementation of Universal Credit), resourcing and including refugee and asylum seeker voices in the work of the strategy. The report provides further details on these challenges and the ways in which New Scots partners are seeking to address them.

#### **Proposed COSLA Position**

8. It is proposed that the Board approves the Year One Report, recognising the achievements made to date as well as the barriers to implementation, and endorses COSLA's ongoing work in this area.

#### **Next Steps**

9. With the Board's approval, COSLA will continue to support the implementation of the strategy and the vital role played by local authorities in welcoming and integrating refugees and asylum seekers in our communities.

**March 2019**

