



FOOTSTEPS TO CROYDON

**LISTENING EXERCISE
REPORT 2020**



**CROYDON
REFUGEE & NEW
COMMUNITIES
FORUM**

PLATFORM FOR MIGRANT VOICES

[HTTPS://CROYDONREFUGEEFORUM.ORG.UK](https://croydonrefugeeforum.org.uk)



CROYDON REFUGEE & NEW COMMUNITIES FORUM

PLATFORM FOR MIGRANT VOICES

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Acknowledgements



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This piece of research was made possible by the commitment and dedication of Christine Double, Brian Davies, Letina Giuli and Michela Tisci who made up the Interview Research Team – a huge thanks to them for offering their time, expertise and humanitarianism. Special thanks to Young Roots, Beats Learning, Croydon Refugee Day Centre and Happy Baby staff and service users for welcoming us during the winter months in early 2020 and engaging with us to complete this work – we were truly heartened, grateful and inspired by their generosity and involvement. I would also like to extend my thanks to Christine Double (CVA), Varsha Baburam (Migrant Help), Dr. Ayar Ata (Former Co-Chair), Ian Willard (Vice Chair) and Prof. Ros Wade for comments, edits and support for the research piece.

In the interests of transparency, I would like to disclose that a former Councillor provided £2000 from his ward budget to support this research and the Forum website. However, none of these funds were utilised. I have led the research exercise, authoring and design of this report, facilitating the creation of the website on a pro-bono basis. The time, effort, travel costs and writing of this report have been done entirely voluntarily to reflect the independence of the information contained within and to ensure we did not compromise the impartiality of the content. **This research has not been funded by the Council, CVA or any other local body.** As I step down as Chair this month, I hope the ethos and principles on which the Forum was built continue to prevail and the voices of those seeking sanctuary are not lost.

Saima Raza (Co-Chair & Author)

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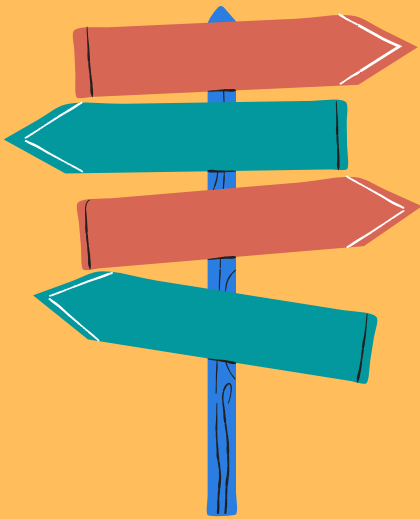
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Introduction

Who is the Croydon New Refugee & New Communities Forum

The History

In February 2018 CVA secured funding from the Mayor's Sports Unites programme and Comic Relief in order to develop a social integration project using sport as a tool to bring people together. The project was designed with input from local people in response to the #westandtogether campaign, supporting refugees, asylum seekers and those from new communities to become volunteers activating others to get together to play and enjoy various sports of their choice and reduce social isolation. The funding also enabled CVA to resurrect the Refugee Forum, which as well as providing advice and support to the sports project, has responded to wider issues affecting refugees, has carried out research of those with lived experience and is now part of a wider recovery plan for Croydon, as it emerges from lockdown to focus on tackling the causes of inequality and moving people to greater independence.

The Story 2019 onwards

The Croydon Refugee and New Communities Forum seeks to act as a counter narrative to the hate and anti-immigrant sentiment that has become prevalent across print and online media. The creation and revival of such an initiative is key to providing support for those working with migrant based charities, as a platform for voices from refugee and newly arrived communities and as a mechanism to ensure those in power are including migrant voices into strategies for Croydon. The Forum has been fortunate in having Croydon Voluntary Action as an early supporter and sponsor, without whom we would not have been able to revive this Forum. The journey started with a local activist or two connecting with CVA to bring the Forum to life, the first steps included contacting refugee based organisations and meeting together where we invited the City of Sanctuary to speak at the Forum's first gathering setting the theme for 'welcome' and directing Croydon toward becoming a Borough of Welcome.

For too long migrant voices have been left out of strategy meetings, discussions and plans for Croydon. Whilst we celebrate Croydon's diversity, we must be equally aware of our responsibility to incorporate their voices into policy discussions. Furthermore, we realised there was no network or platform for those working or accessing migrant based charities; we want to facilitate communication between organisations whether it be sharing resources, signposting or applying for funding. More importantly, we want to create a culture of collaboration whereby projects are fit for purpose, include the voices of migrant communities and take into account their needs and experiences. The Forum is independent and we are not affiliated with any statutory sector institutions or agendas, it is a community-led project. It will take time for us to reach the goals we have set; the philosophy of solidarity underpinned the creation of the Forum and will continue to do so.

The Research



Terms

The report employs a variety of terms to refer to our 'refugee' respondents. These include; newly arrived migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and those seeking sanctuary. We use an array of terms as 'refugee' does not necessarily encompass the experiences of all migrants. Additionally, these terms serve to 'empower' and recognise the strength and struggle refugees have overcome to reach the UK.

Description of Project

The Croydon Refugee & New Communities Forum ('The Forum') aim was to undertake a baseline survey to create a picture of what migrant and refugee led services exist in our area. The survey highlights grassroots groups, specific support activities and support groups and expresses what they felt were the prevailing needs of refugees and migrant groups. The second and principle aim of the research focused on migrant voices, by arranging interviews with 50 respondents (ranging from refugees, former unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers and those who had secured status). We sent a mailshot to all migrant based services on our mailing list (around 40 organisations) and from this process the following 4 were selected: Happy Baby Community, Croydon Refugee Day Centre, Beats Learning and Young Roots.

The Report is for the wider public, statutory and voluntary sector organisations to gain an insight into refugee dynamics in Croydon. The findings can act as a blueprint for the Forum's future strategy and identify gaps to work on.

Objective

The research objective was to examine the welcome extended toward migrants in our locality, their experiences, engagement with services, the deficits in services and activities and what they would like to see changed and improved. In addition to this, we initiated a Freedom of Information request to determine the Councils' response to the refugee crisis locally, the results of which are shared in Chapter 3. The aim of the report is to provide an overview of services and activities in Croydon and capture the voices of migrants (often overlooked) when services are being structured. The Report will also highlight key areas for improvement, and we hope this will allow us to work closely across sectors to help newly arrived migrants and those settled in our Borough to feel part of our community and empower them to participate and be voices for the change they wish to see. It is our hope that one of the outcomes of the report culminates in a Steering Group with an active representation of migrant voices and that more people from those with lived experiences will commit to joining the Forum.

The report will also help construct objectives for our work toward becoming a Borough of Sanctuary (see <https://croydon.cityofsanctuary.org>) and inform our strategy moving forward. The website element is a crucial one. At the heart of reviving the Forum was the need to collaborate, connect and create change. A website would help the Forum develop an identity and be a platform for information, guidance and communication (including social media engagement). It would allow us to advertise for volunteers and skilled positions, call out for donations and connect with wider national campaigns relating to migration. It would also provide an opportunity for new communities to learn what is happening in Croydon and what activities and provisions they can access, for example; where the local food bank is, how to find mother and baby groups or where they can access ESOL classes. We would also like to start connecting people with social prescribing in Croydon and outdoor initiatives.

We hope the launch of this Report and the sharing of our findings will help build stronger cross-sectorial relationships including with Councillors and MP's locally to strengthen our responses and work with migrants.

Areas the project took place

Central, West and North Croydon

Outcomes

- Website (<https://croydonrefugeeforum.org.uk>) with basic information including opportunities and abilities to connect.
- Report (first of its kind) outlining refugee/migrant services, feedback from aforementioned communities and recommendation for services including deficits in services. The Report will form the foundation for the Forum 2020/21 strategic objectives and development. We feel it is crucial this is informed by refugee and migrant voices. The Report's initial findings were presented at City Hall, London on 28th February 2020.

The Stats

3-6%

Of all EU
asylum
claims made
in the UK

0.02%
UK Pop.

(2018-2019)

1800+

Incarcerated
in detention
centres

64%+

Rejection rate
in the UK

£5.39
per day

Cash support to refugees for
food, sanitation and clothing

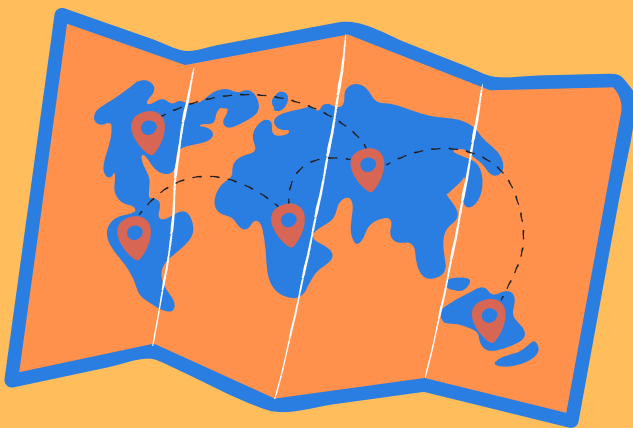


84.5%

Of all refugees live in the
developing world

**70.9
MILLION**

Forcibly displaced



Chapter 1

THE LANDSCAPE

Refugee Crisis Europe

The European migrant crisis has become a somewhat omnipresent feature of daily life. Flows of people seeking sanctuary continue to arrive into Europe, risking their lives, thwarting traffickers and oft-times engaging smugglers to secure passage to the western borders of the continent. Appalling images of their struggles are routinely played out on our TV screens. These journeys are fraught with danger. This struggle staunchly follows them into the arrivals process, whereby local inefficiencies to process asylum claims, declining humanitarianism, overburdened infrastructures and archaic bureaucratic procedures delay, deter and dissolve refugees hopes. The purposeful nature of these obstacles serves as a clear warning, 'you are not welcome'.

A lack of unified asylum policy in Europe has left refugees stranded on shores across the continent in conditions that can only be described as inhumane and falling severely short of State's obligations under international law and regional human rights instruments. Individual States seethe with resentment at what they perceive as 'trespassers', begrudging their legal duty to 'help'. People fleeing political upheavals, civil strife, famine, abject poverty, war and climate induced degradation are utilising the Mediterranean corridor to flee to a place of safety. The southern border towns of European States are dotted with refugee camps and informal accommodation sites housing thousands of people on a given day. NGO's on the ground do what they can to provide material assistance, food parcels, access to medical/maternal care and immunisations, advocacy on behalf of refugees to access legal help, support in the process of asylum claims and manage their well-being. Much of this is through the actions of volunteers, whose role in managing the crisis cannot be overestimated. The political will to assist is sorely lacking in the echelons of power as we see the rise of right-wing populism used as a weapon to deny vulnerable people their rights despite residents from across European States dedicating their time, skills and efforts to migrant justice; a fragile movement operating in a hostile environment with limited capacity and resources nonetheless persevering to ensure magnanimity triumphs in the face of adversity. Europe has a history and prominence in humanitarianism, yet, it is not without risk within its own borders, with reports of civil society volunteers and workers coming under attack for 'helping' those in need and subsequently perpetuating the crisis.

In 2019, up to 123,663 people arrived at EU borders, mostly by sea[1]. States across Europe remain focused on sealing borders including through the reported use of unlawful push-backs from EU borders including Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Poland, and Spain[2]. According to UNHCR in 2019, around 1319 people died or have gone missing crossing the Mediterranean sea[3].

EU governments prioritize border control and outsourcing of responsibility for migrants and asylum seekers to other countries, and have made only limited progress on expanding safe and legal channels for migrants to enter the EU. The European Commission announced in September (2019) that EU countries had fulfilled 64% of its' pledge to resettle 50,000 refugees in 2018-2019, a fraction of global needs[4].

The EU democratic machinery relies on States to enact immigration policies, indeed the challenge to create a uniform continental policy is enormous, however, the deficit in such legislative structures and protection is only seeking to exacerbate a nebulous situation. More so, because the distribution of economic and resource disparity across Europe is stark and this may greatly hinder some State's abilities to manage huge influxes of refugees and irregular migrants at their borders.

Some countries have used the coronavirus as an excuse to erode access to asylum and introduce hard-line migration policies that cannot be justified by public health concerns, and EU states, especially Italy and Malta, have further retreated from the international legal obligation to rescue and provide safe harbour to asylum seekers and migrants who are in distress at sea[5]. Despite the onset of Covid19, the numbers of people crossing into Europe has not abated, demonstrating their desperation. For instance, during the summer of 2020, movements along the Eastern, Central and Western Mediterranean have continued and even increased along the Central Mediterranean route despite the Covid-19 pandemic affecting destination countries in Europe[6].

In addition, the UK saw record numbers of refugees especially children crossing the English Channel with at least 3,950 migrants reaching the UK in small boats this year[7]. With the Dublin Agreement ceasing to apply after Brexit, the UK Home Office is seeking to 'return' many of these arrivals, in certain cases to France and Germany who have agreed to consider their asylum claims[8].

In July 2020 the UK Home Office indicated they would be seeking to resume evictions giving refugees just 28 days to find alternative accommodation, putting hundreds of refugees at risk of homelessness and destitution in the midst of a global pandemic[9]. This is deeply concerning, given that a recent report by Public Health England revealed BAME individuals are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill or dying from the virus[10].

The EU committed over €10 billion[11] between 2015-2017 to migration management, directed into humanitarian aid, emergency support and funds for aid agencies. This is an extraordinary amount of money, however, five years on from height of the crisis in 2015, it has become distinctly and undeniably clear that 'funding' alone will not resolve the crisis. People will continue to migrate to Europe, this is as inevitable as it is unstoppable.

In 2018 alone, over 17 million[12] were displaced due to disasters especially drought, adding significance to the growing phenomenon of environmentally induced migration. It seems increasingly likely that this will add yet another strand for reasons to seek sanctuary elsewhere in the near future.

WHO IS A REFUGEE

According to the UN Refugee Convention, the definition of a refugee is someone who: 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country' (Article 1, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees)

WHO IS AN ASYLUM SEEKER

The definition of an asylum seeker is someone who has arrived in a country and asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee, they are known as an asylum seeker. In the UK, this means they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen would. For example, people seeking asylum aren't allowed to work. The right to seek asylum is a legal right we all share. **It isn't illegal to seek asylum**, because seeking asylum is a legal process. It also isn't illegal to be refused asylum – it just means you haven't been able to meet the very strict criteria to prove your need for protection as a refugee[13].

WHO IS AN UNACCOMPANIED MINOR

Children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers. While their claim is processed, they are cared for by a local authority. As of 31 March 2018 London boroughs were looking after 1,500 UASC (a third of unaccompanied children seeking asylum in England). The Pan London Rota is an agreement by Directors of Children Services to support equal distribution of UASC 16/17 years old in London. The Rota is a voluntary arrangement and all London local authorities have positively contributed to receiving rota referrals. The Pan London Rota is managed by Croydon Council's Permanence 1 Team.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3i9LHWm>

UK STATISTICS 2018-2019

126,720

are refugees out of
67m population

45,244

Pending
asylum cases

125

Stateless
persons in the
UK

18,915

Offered settled
status 2018-19

GLOBALLY

4/5

migrants/refugees
stay in their region

3.7m

Turkey hosts the
largest number of
refugees in the world

TOP 4 Countries for Asylum (EU)

Spain

France

Germany

Greece

The UK

According to UNHCR, in the year ending March 2020, the UK received 35,099 applications for asylum, an 11% increase from the previous year. By the end of 2019, the highest number of first-time asylum applicants were registered in Spain (35,400 first-time applicants) making up 21 % of all first-time applicants in the EU Member States), followed by France (32,800) Germany (31,600) and Greece (28,000). These 4 Countries account for 74% of all first-time applicants in the EU-27[14].

The table (above) illustrates the top 5 countries for asylum applications in the first quarter of 2020 were from: Iran, Albania, Iraq, Pakistan and Eritrea. The top nationality for asylum applications were Iranian. The total number of people detained in the year ending March 2020 was **23,075**, which was 5% less than the previous year. The majority (84%) of those entering detention centres in year ending March 2020 were non-EU nationals[15]. Albanians were the most common nationality entering detention in the latest year, accounting for 15% of the total (3,398) with second most common nationality were Iranian nationals at (1,826). As at 31 March 2020, there were 895 people in immigration detention, down from 1,637 at the end of December 2019, and less than half the number as at 31 March 2019 (1,839) [16]. The onset of Covid19 and its implications must be considered when considering the above statistics especially detention.

Most people seeking asylum are not permitted to work or study, hence they are reliant upon Home Office subsistence which equates to £37.75 per person per week for food, clothes and toiletries[17]. This is woefully low to meet basic needs[18]. Persons seeking asylum are “given somewhere to live if (they need it, this could be in a flat, house, hostel or bed and breakfast, you cannot choose where you live”[19]. Often asylum accommodation is substandard and not ideal for families[20]. Those seeking asylum get free National Health Service (NHS) healthcare, such as to see a doctor or get hospital treatment including free prescriptions and pregnant mothers are eligible for an additional £3 per week payment[21]. Whilst certain NHS treatments are free, not all, for example refused asylum seekers are not eligible for secondary care and may incur charges[22]. Furthermore, the challenge of Covid19 and its disproportionate effect on BAMER communities means refugee and asylum seeking persons and families are at an increased risk[23].

The UK

S.95

Support is provided to destitute asylum seekers until their claim is finally determined, which may encompass either accommodation or subsistence, or both. 'Invalid applications for support and support type not yet known' are cases that have been deemed invalid or which have not yet been assessed.

S.4

Provides support for individuals whose claim has been refused and who have exhausted their appeal rights, but who are destitute and are temporarily unable to leave the UK.

S.98

Support provides accommodation for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute and who are either awaiting a decision on an application for Section 95 support or are supported under Section 95 and are awaiting transfer to their accommodation.

What Asylum Seekers are entitled to by law: <https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get>

The UK offered protection – in the form of asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave and resettlement – to 20,339 people in the year ending March 2020, 17% higher than 2019[24].

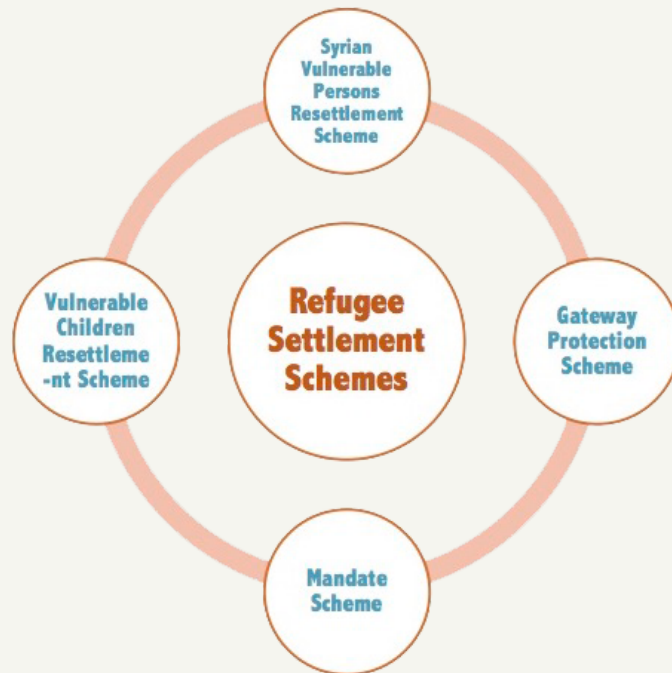
The number of grants of protection and alternative forms of leave in the year ending March 2020 included:

- **12,863** grants of asylum, with notable increases in grants to **Iranian** (up 62% to 2,653), **Sudanese** (1,657) and **Eritrean** (1,734) nationals
- 1,482 grants of humanitarian protection, over half of these (58%) were granted to Libyan nationals
- 1,026 grants of alternative forms of leave following an application for asylum, down 18%
- **4,968** grants of protection through resettlement schemes, 14% fewer than in the previous year – and three-quarters of which were to **Syrian nationals**[25].

Refugees can be resettled to the UK via 4 schemes. The Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) accounted for 4,030 of those resettled in the UK in the year ending March 2020. Around 416 people were resettled under the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)[26].

It is worth noting refugees and migrants across Europe helped and continue to help fight COVID-19, across European countries refugees and migrants have held vital roles in fighting the pandemic and keeping European economies functioning during the outbreak of COVID-19 in front-line positions such as doctors, nurses and caretakers[27].

London & Croydon



Four types of Resettlement Schemes

There have been commitments made by City Hall to settle refugees and asylum seekers in the capital. London has resettled over 1087 refugees through the Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Schemes[28]. Additionally, there are a number of City of Sanctuary and Welcome Groups, creating places of sanctuary and solidarity with refugees and those seeking asylum[29]. The community sponsorship scheme is “a programme enabling citizens to welcome a refugee family into their local area and support them as they rebuild their lives here in the UK...offering a family a safe and legal route to resettlement which they would not be able to access without Community Sponsorship”[30]. It is lauded as a “practical response to the mass displacement of people across the world due to war and persecution”[31]. The government has also launched a campaign providing citizens to volunteer, donate and sponsor refugees[32].

Croydon Croydon is the second most populous Borough in London with an estimated population of 386,710, with arriving international migrants included in the resident population statistics if they remain in the UK for at least a year[33]. Nearly a quarter of this figure (24.5%) is made up of young people aged 17 years or under[34]. However, many persons seeking refugee status and those claiming asylum are transient and may not remain in Croydon for a year or have the option to do so. For those that have remained for over a year, their data is not captured by the Croydon Observatory hence they are assumed to be integrated into the local population, which is an inaccurate depiction. Approximately 17.1% of the Croydon population are non-UK nationals, whilst the London average is 22.2%.

Asylum Process

**ENTER
UK - Croydon**

**CLAIM
ASYLUM**

**SCREENING
INTERVIEW**

**SUBSTANTIVE
INTERVIEW**

POSITIVE

- REFUGEE STATUS
- HUMANITARIAN STATUS
- OTHER LEAVE TO REMAIN

DECISION

- APPEALS PROCESS
- FRESH SUBMISSIONS
- LEAVE THE UK

NEGATIVE

Croydon

Region of Origin	Number	%
European Union	33,000	8.5
Non-EU European	2,000	0.5
Middle & East Central Asian	2,000	0.5
East Asian	N/A	N/A
South Asian	11,000	2.8
South East Asian	2,000	0.5
Sub Saharan African	6,000	1.6
North African	N/A	N/A
North American	2,000	0.5
Central & South American	6,000	1.6
Oceanian	3,000	0.8
Rest of the World	17,000	4.4

Of the 17.1% the majority are from Europe with 8.5% from the EU and 0.5% from the non-EU States, making up almost 9% of the non-UK national population. It is difficult to discern from this whether sections of the populations outlined above are from refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds. The Croydon Strategic Partnership (June 2020) Borough Profile does not provide a breakdown of refugees and those seeking asylum or newly arrived migrants seeking sanctuary, rather it states: One of the 'challenges' of population is "the Croydon population continues to grow from long-term international migration and 17.1% of the population is made up of non-UK born resident"[35]. Rather than viewing this as an opportunity or ensconcing this in more positive language, international migration is labelled a 'challenge', creating a barrier to change. Such rhetoric does little to facilitate welcome or challenge anti-migrant sentiments. Our neighbouring Borough of Lewisham have Council pages dedicated to Refugees[36], with information on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme which Croydon Council chose not to support. Additionally, there is information on accommodation and volunteering with refugees and their corporate strategy outlines their commitment to be a Borough of Welcome for refugees. They even boast a cabinet Member for Refugees[37].

Croydon

Southwark Council's newsletter features and promotes refugee events, additionally, refugee support groups are actively working with their Council to create a Borough of Sanctuary[38]. Lambeth Council promoted Refugee Week 2020, despite the challenges in bringing events together this year[39]. Typing in the word 'refugee' into Lambeth Council's website brings a myriad of pages highlight events and initiatives. Croydon Council in comparison falls short in showing its support for refugees and demonstrating a commitment to ending anti-migrant sentiment in our Borough.

New Croydon Recovery Plan

The Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA) and community partners are formulating a Recovery Plan that will focus on 'people resilience' - the ethos is about community partners joining forces to offer a wrap around service for the most vulnerable. Part of the objectives is to have Croydon Council involved too. Covid19 has simultaneously aggravated the risk factors and heightened the vulnerabilities of people in Croydon, while uncovering hidden assets in communities through a new layer of civil society – the 70 mutual-aid groups supporting 3,000+ people in Croydon. Croydon's emergency response has highlighted how crucial the voluntary sector is in supporting people who fall through gaps in the system and reminds us that treating symptoms is a stop-gap: our role is to support civil society in finding solutions based on self-management and community resilience.

By developing a more preventative approach CVA will be working with community partners to tackle the economic and social consequences of Covid-19, targeting those people hardest hit - by addressing the issues that made them so vulnerable in the first place. This includes refugees, asylum seekers and those from new communities who are particularly hampered from being more independent by restrictions based on their immigration status.

The preventative approach sets out to engage communities in finding solutions, with the individual becoming less a recipient of services than a co-producer of step-by-step ways forward. In moving from an emergency to a recovery model our challenge is to mobilise communities from within, surrounding individuals and families with collaborators who will help them navigate pathways to success. Our aim now is to mobilise volunteers, mutual-aid groups, faith communities, foodbanks, social prescribing teams and our Council, College and VCS delivery partners; specifically refugee led and refugee supporting groups, in managing people through the recovery period, using their collective experience to remodel services that respond rapidly to new needs in the community, but in preventative ways that address socio-economic issues.



Chapter 2

MIGRANT-BASED

ORGANISATION SURVEY

MIGRANT-BASED ORGANISATIONS

In early Spring 2020 we sent a 9-question survey via Survey Monkey to all Migrant-based organisations on our mailing list, this was some 40 organisations. Of this around one-third responded. We received responses from 14 charities that help, support and provide advice/activities for refugees and migrants. This allowed us to build a robust picture of migrant-based organisations in Croydon; how many volunteers they host, how many persons they have helped, what are the main reasons people seek their help and/or advice and also what they would like to see improved in Croydon for refugees and those seeking sanctuary who use their services. We have outlined the results of the responses in the Appendix (see page 72-76).

WHAT KIND OF SERVICES OR ADVICE DOES YOUR ORGANISATION PROVIDE?

We provided twelve options to pick from. Ten charities stated they provide support. Nine of them also provide advice (this can include asylum support, where to access local services, signposting, housing and universal credit advice). Eight provide education and informal learning (this includes ESOL, sport and dance). Half the organisations stated they help with advocacy and health and well-being. There was only one organisation that provides maternity care and help and three provide counselling and therapy. Clearly there is need for more support young mothers, children and mental health support.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS THAT HAVE ACCESSED YOUR SERVICE OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS.

Organisations helped refugees and those seeking sanctuary from fifteen ethnic groups. Persons arrived from five continents, from various backgrounds, cultures and religions. The majority of persons hailed from Afghanistan and Iran, followed closely by Pakistan and countries in Africa. There were also significant numbers from Albania in Europe; overall a diverse range of persons who bring with them a unique set of skills, experience and stories. It is no small challenge to ensure organisations are running culturally sensitive projects and meeting the various needs of their diverse client group.

MIGRANT-BASED ORGANISATIONS

WHAT SUPPORT SERVICES WOULD YOUR SERVICE USERS BENEFIT FROM?

Thirteen of the fourteen organisations stated their service users would benefit from understanding how to access local services and support. This was followed by education and training which includes ESOL and access to higher education. Over 75% of the organisations confirmed refugees would benefit from legal advice, accommodation support and social activities. Whilst over 70% added that mental health, well-being and counselling were crucial. Emotional support and help to access local support such as universal credit were cited by 60% of the organisations. Education and training are key for refugees as they are the first steps towards being able to communicate confidently and increase their chances of entering the competitive job market.

WHAT ARE THE AGE GROUPS YOU WORK WITH?

All organisations worked with and/or supported 18-24 year olds. This was followed by 11-18 years olds and those between 24-44 years of age. Unfortunately only two (14%) organisations worked with children under 11 and three (20%) with those over 65. This demonstrates a need for services catering to these age groups. Often younger children are assumed to access services along with family and older siblings, however, their needs are different (such as language skills, curriculum stage). There need to be more services geared toward older refugees especially focusing on health, accommodation and well-being.

WHAT WERE MIGRANTS/REFUGEES MAINLY SEEKING ASSISTANCE WITH?

Each organisation was able to provide five responses in terms of what services refugees were seeking. The most cited responses were: donations, asylum/legal support, health, education (including ESOL) and advice services. Refugees were also in need of maternity care, leisure activities, specialist support as victims of trafficking, age disputes, LGBTQI services and relaxation techniques. This demonstrates the range of services and support organisations offer refugees, essentially lifelines.

Migrant-Based Projects Croydon

355*

volunteers per
month

4400*

migrants
helped

11/14

charities stated
they felt
'moderate' to
'highly'
connected to
the voluntary
sector in
Croydon

18-24

all 14 charities
helped people
within this age
group

70%

of charities
provide
support
including
emotional
support to
refugees

**Over
90%**

charities stated
understanding how to
'access to local services
and support' was most
beneficial for refugees

15

Different ethnic
groups helped

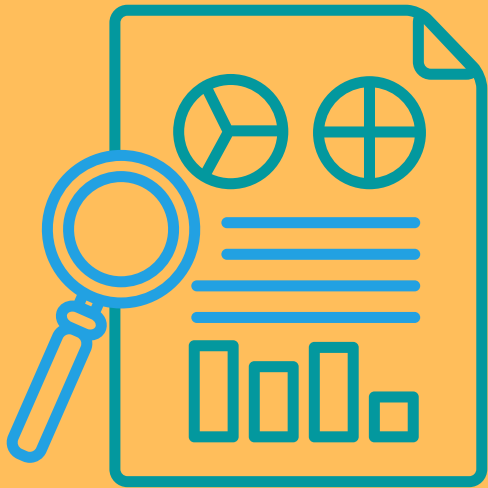
40+

migrant-based
projects

How can the Croydon New Communities & Refugee Forum help your organisation in delivering services and welcoming new arrivals?

- Share projects available and referrals to our project...cultural orientation including... cultural mediation for newly arrived people, peer to peer support, not only to overcome language barrier but also cultural differences and feel less lonely - mental health is not always accepted and we should find ways around it to support people against isolation.
 - Offer specialist support, counselling, immigration advice, mentoring and equipment.
 - Join together with existing services to extend the reach and capacity available.
- By working on a strategic level to join up services for refugees across Croydon; by working on a strategic level to highlight and build awareness of structural failings and inadequacies in Home Office Initial Accommodation Units for Asylum Seekers - and the ongoing contract breaches by contract deliverers.
 - Having a platform to access information about other organisations in Croydon, upcoming events, services provided, collaboration portal,
 - Mapping everything available and multilingual guidance.

This Chapter reveals the diverse range of services and support organisations provide to refugees and those seeking sanctuary on a daily basis. The data collected via the survey shows the array of ages groups, ethnicities and needs of those arriving in Croydon. We need to improve our connectivity and work even closer together in the future to form strategic partnerships to ensure a good level of care is being provided to refugees and new arrivals. The voluntary sector has stepped up and provided support, advice, donations and food in challenging circumstances both financially and politically. There are over 355 volunteers on average every month working with the fourteen organisations supporting almost 4500 refugees and new arrivals, this is testament to the good will that can be found locally. There are over 40 plus organisations supporting refugees and migrants in Croydon, the aforementioned figures refer to one-third of this overall figure. This is an immense effort that should be recognised by the voluntary sector across Croydon, the Council and statutory services. The input of migrant-based organisations serves to provide emotional support, donations, education, mental health support, legal support and advice to name some of the services provided, filling the deficit of statutory organisations. In order for us to provide the best care and support for refugees and become a Borough of Welcome, more cross-sectorial partnerships would be welcome. We have experts from organisations and the refugees themselves, they ought to have a say in strategies that shape our local community agenda and the corporate plan for Croydon.



Chapter 3

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Freedom of Information Act Results

Whilst there is extensive data around migration and patterns at the national levels, regional and Croydon based data pertaining to arrivals, settlers and number of refugees is woefully inadequate. We made a substantial effort to discern information relating to refugees and newly arrived migrants in Croydon, however, we were unable to locate this. The local census and Croydon Observatory data did not capture information on refugees. Unfortunately, this leaves a deficit in our understanding of numbers, locations and the nature of help they have sought. Without this key data being captured, the Borough is falling short in terms of helping refugees whilst they are in the application stage and for those who secure status and settle locally we assume they have 'integrated' into the population hence there is no targeted help. As we were unable to find a suitable contact at the Council to answer our queries we made a Freedom of Information request, asking the following questions related to adult refugees, the responses are in bold:-

HAS CROYDON COUNCIL FUNDED ANY INTEGRATION PROJECT(S) FOR ADULT REFUGEE AND/OR ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE LAST 5 YEARS?

NONE

WHAT NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS THAT SOUGHT HELP FROM CROYDON COUNCIL BETWEEN JANUARY 2018 AND DECEMBER 2019?

UNKNOWN

HOW MANY REFUGEES OR ASYLUM SEEKERS HAVE BEEN SETTLED IN CROYDON?

UNKNOWN

DID CROYDON ACCEPT ANY REFUGEES UNDER THE SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME?

NONE

In addition to the above, we also asked if the Council have any initiatives solely dedicated to aid and help integrate refugee and asylum seeking communities in Croydon.

Freedom of Information Act Results

Croydon Council responded by stating it "does not have any initiatives solely dedicated to aid and help integrate refugee and asylum seeking communities in Croydon. Croydon Council complies with its statutory duties by providing support services to vulnerable adults with care and support needs under the Care Act 2014; to care leavers under the Leaving Care Act 2000; and to vulnerable children with families and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under Children Act 1989". The full set of questions and responses can be found in the Appendix. The responses from the Council illustrate a serious shortcoming in meeting or understanding the needs of refugees and arrivals into the Borough. We also sought to ask questions regarding unaccompanied minors, where the Council does fare better. However, the young persons we spoke to who have undergone support through the foster care system felt abandoned after the Council's statutory duties of care were expended. Without statistics pertaining to Croydon, we must rely on national statistics and indicators to determine the rate of success. According to the [APPG Refugee \(2017\) Report](#) it was found half of unaccompanied children have their asylum claim refused and are granted limited leave to remain as an unaccompanied minor. This leave lasts until the child turns 17.5 or for 2.5 years after the leave was granted.

'HAS CROYDON COUNCIL FUNDED ANY INTEGRATION PROJECTS FOR CHILD REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE LAST 5 YEARS?'

Yes, the Controlling Migration Fund (CMF) aims to promote community cohesion and integration of young asylum seekers and refugees in the borough. We applied twice successfully in 2017 and 2018.

'IS THERE A DEPARTMENT/PERSON AT THE COUNCIL THAT OVERSEES CHILD REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS?'

Social work with Children Looked after Care Leavers (UASC) Virtual school has a dedicated lead for UASC. CMF project manager involved in projects supporting UASC.

Freedom of Information Act Results

'Were there any projects to support unaccompanied minors between January 2018 and December 2019?'

Summermix 2019: young asylum seekers and refugees 'Croydon Town College'

- Interim education provision for young asylum seekers and refugees aged 16-19 awaiting a college place
- Peripatetic teacher to support transition of Y11 young asylum seekers from interim provision to mainstream schools

Foster Carer champions training scheme

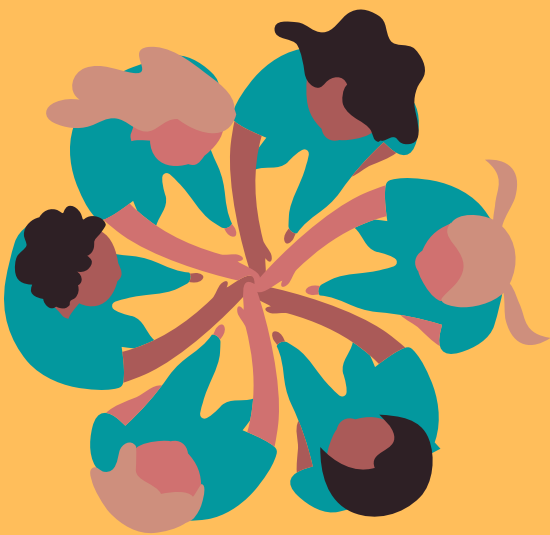
- UASC specialist training package developed by Croydon foster carer champions and IOM.
- Training on Caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and young people delivered by the champions to other Croydon carers

UASC Knowledge Hub: development of a specialist UASC digital hub/centre of excellence supporting social workers/local authorities with little or no experience of caring for young asylum seekers and refugees Recruitment of a youth transition and welfare officer. The role focuses on supporting young asylum seekers negatively impacted by delays in asylum and immigration processes and by complex transitions.

Virtual school: Croydon Town School: this is not a project (as in limited in time). It is part of the offer for any young asylum seekers year 11 who are awaiting for a school place (interim education provision) .The two below are the same project: IOM and Barnardo's jointly delivered a training programme to foster carers on trafficking of Vietnamese and Albanian children in care.

The Council also provided a monthly breakdown of how many unaccompanied minors they supported between April 2018 and March 2019. This averaged around 270+ children per month.

As part of our research we contacted the UASC team and the Virtual School as well as the no recourse to public funds team based in Croydon Council yet we had no response. Hence, we instigated a Freedom of Information Act request as we had no other avenue to collect data on adult and child refugees in Croydon. Much of their work with unaccompanied minors is funded by the Government's Controlling Migration Fund, this funding comes to an end in 2020, it will be interesting to gauge the Council's response in 2021 and the effect it will have in supporting young refugees in Croydon. The FOI request demonstrates the Council needs to collect and share data on refugees locally so as to improve our response and integration strategies. Their support for child refugees or unaccompanied minors post-statutory requirements must be subjected to more scrutiny.



Chapter 4

THE SURVEY: LISTENING
EXERCISE

The Listening Exercise

WHY

to listen and hear refugees, to raise their voices

WHERE

Young Roots
Happy Baby
Refugee Day
Centre
Beats Learning

WHOM

50 refugees, asylum seekers, newly arrived migrants with status

One of the key objectives identified quite early on for the Forum was to identify how to get to the heart of newly arrived communities and how to ensure that their voices and experiences inform our strategy moving forward. This is when the idea of a listening exercise came to mind in the lovely Communita Cafe. We would seek to speak to fifty persons from asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds, both new arrivals and historical. We would speak to men and women and we would work with Croydon based projects to do all this. Over Autumn 2019 we formulated questions and got in touch with a number of organisations. We finally settled on working with beneficiaries of the Croydon Refugee Day Centre, Happy Baby Community, Young Roots and Beats Learning to conduct interviews. The questions were shared with all the projects and we set about engaging researchers on a voluntary basis to help facilitate the interview process, the collection and collation of data and helping write this report. This Report is the result of a collaborative effort and input of some seventy plus people from those we interviewed, to researchers, advisors, the Co-Chairs, CVA staff and charities involved. In this sense the ethos of the Forum was upheld and this report is one of the first of its kind (locally) to really tell the stories and views of newly arrived migrants and those seeking sanctuary in our Borough.

Sampling and Demographic Analysis

Interviews were carried out by four researchers during January and February 2020 at three locations: the Croydon Refugee Day Centre, the Young Roots evening support group (for 18-25 year olds) and the Happy Baby Community group for women and babies. Respondents were approached by one of our four interviewers or the support workers and helpers at the centres with information about the project and invited to participate. Some decided to participate, others declined, some changed their minds after discussions with their friends. All respondents signed a simple participation agreement allowing their responses to be analysed in aggregate form, anonymity was guaranteed. The manner of the approach made by the interviewers and the tone of the interview were important in securing participation.

Many of those interviewed had prior experience of rigorous interviews with the Home Office, lawyers and sometimes the police. For some it took a little while to appreciate that our interviews enabled a dialogue without high stakes. Some respondents remained, understandably, guarded whilst others openly discussed their personal journeys and the experiences that brought them to the UK and their successes and difficulties on arrival. Despite our interviewees having varying levels of proficiency in English, all interviews were carried out without the use of a third person translator. This was considered important as it ensured confidentiality for the respondents and avoided any risk of censure, whether intended or not, by the interviewee or the interpreter. When necessary google translate became the shared method of aiding understanding.

In total 50 interviews were conducted lasting typically between 20 minutes and 45 minutes. There was no time constraint placed on the discussions. Some people wanted to help by providing just specific information, for others it was an opportunity to tell their story in a safe environment. It became apparent to all the interviewers that although we were often in a situation where we could not solve a specific problem for an interviewee, the act of talking and listening without judgement was cathartic for many people.

50

**PEOPLE
SEEKING
SANCTUARY**

64% | 36%

MALE

FEMALE



DEMOGRAPHICS

40%

Hold a University Degree

16%

College level educated

40%

Minors on arrival to UK

50%

Employed before arriving to the UK

20

Countries and nationalities

30

Languages spoken

Country of Origin



In total, the refugees we spoke to originated from 20 Countries with 30 languages spoken.

08	AFGHANISTAN	02	KUWAIT	01	POLAND
06	ALBANIA	01	SOMALIA	01	GUINEA
04	ERITREA	01	SYRIA		
09	IRAN	01	EL SALVADOR		
03	PAKISTAN	01	SIERRA LEONE		
02	SUDAN	01	ZIMBABWE		
02	UGANDA	01	REPUBLIC OF CONGO		
02	SRI LANKA	01	MALAYSIA		
02	INDIA	01	KOSOVO		

Age

The age profile of respondents is shown below:

Age	Number	%
Under 18 (all 17 years old)	4	8
18-24	16	32
25-34	14	28
35-44	7	14
45-54	6	12
55-64	3	6
65+	0	0

64% of respondents self-identified as male and 36% female.

Legal Status

Of those people interviewed 78% were able to describe their legal status unambiguously. The balance of 22% does not imply any failing or incompetence on the part of the interviewee or interviewer, but rather the difficulties of establishing precise status at the time of interview taking account of language difficulties and the complexity and length of the refugee process. Of these people who were precise about their status, 50% had an asylum claim in process and 44% had secured refugee status. The remainder were in the process of appeal.

Education

Some of the interviewees were still of school age, but of those over 18 years old, 43% of all those interviewed had degree level qualifications or post-graduate qualifications. By way of comparison, In July to September 2017, of those not enrolled on any educational course in the UK, 42% were graduates.

Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/graduatesintheuklabourmarket2017>

Length of Time in UK

Although the sample was self-selecting in respect of the time respondents has been in the UK, we obtained a fairly even spread, sufficient in our opinion to avoid any strong bias towards new entrants or settled communities, and this was in line with the intentions of the research.

How Long Have You Been in the UK?	Raw Count	%
1-6 months	16	32
7-12 months	3	6
1-2 years	6	12
2-4 years	10	20
5-10 years	7	14
10 + years	8	16

What was the Legal Status of the sample at the time of Interview?

Of those interviewed 58% were in the process of seeking asylum status and 30% had been granted "Leave to Remain" status. 10% of our sample had achieved British citizenship

UK Residency Status	Raw Count	%
UK Citizenship granted	5	10
Leave to remain	15	30
Appeal	1	2
Asylum Seeker (in progress)	26	58
Failed application	3	6

Reasons for Leaving

This research did not control our sample of respondents in any way in terms of the motivations for leaving their homes. The data and analysis presented here in respect of 'reasons for leaving' does not purport to be representative of asylum seekers or other migrants arriving in the UK at the time of the survey or at any other time. The significance of asking about reasons for leaving is to inform and provide context to help in understanding the needs of this group such that the provision of support and services can be guided. For example, 42% of the respondents directly referenced threat to their own lives through war, civil war or targeted violence. Of all respondents, 36% left due to difficulties arising from their ethnic group, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity. When combined, these two reasons accounted for 64% of all respondents.

10% of respondents cited sex trafficking or sex slavery as the reason for leaving and seeking safety. The balance of respondents (26%) cited reasons such as; persecution for political beliefs, 'persecution for what I had written as a journalist', safety in general, lack of family support, mental health issues, financial issues with some too traumatised or frightened to provide a reason.

WHY DO PEOPLE FLEE....TO CROYDON

**Civil War &
Targeted
Violence**

**Political
Upheavel &
Persecution**

**Ethnic or
Religious
Persecution**

**Sexual
Orientation**

**Lack of family
support**

**Financial
Concerns**

**Mental
Health**

**Exploitation
or
Trafficking**

Leaving Home...

The trauma associated with leaving home was evident for many people.

“THE TALIBAN TRIED TO TAKE ME ... TRIED TO TAKE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE VILLAGE TO FIGHT. THE TALIBAN HAD ALL THE POWER.”

Afghan, male,

“THERE WAS A CIVIL WAR GOING ON ALL AROUND...NOT SAFE AT THE COLLEGE, THEY CAME TO THE COLLEGE FIGHTING”

Sudanese male,
under 18 on arrival

“MY FATHER WAS SHOT IN FRONT OF OUR HOUSE. I WAS TORTURED. THERE IS A BIG PROBLEM BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE REBEL MOVEMENT”

Afghan, male, under 18
on arrival

“I WAS SOLD INTO SEX SLAVERY; ALBANIA, ITALY THEN UK.”

Albanian female,
18-24, former
student

“I CHANGED RELIGION; I BECAME A CHRISTIAN FOUR YEARS AGO. PEOPLE FOLLOWED ME FOR THIS. I WENT TO PRISON”.

Iranian, male, 35-44. Former
Engineer

Who are these asylum seekers and refugees? What lives did they lead at home?

Who are these asylum seekers and refugees? What lives did they lead at home? The act of sitting down for 30-45 minutes with a refugee that you have never met was not only revealing from a research point of view but was humbling too. In contrast, recently, some sections of our media have taken delight in voyeuristically intercepting migrants arriving via boat across the English Channel. This act of presenting people as generic 'boat refugees' is ignorant of individual stories and circumstances. The process of interviewing our 50 migrants revealed stories of hardship, heartbreak and bravery. Despite the desperation of their current situation, many people had left behind good jobs and careers. We spoke to teachers, engineers, air stewards, coffee shop proprietors, a journalist, bank manager, film maker and hair stylist alongside the numerous students who had been forced to abandon their studies.

The list in 'Lives left Behind' provides an insight into refugees previous lives.

Early Experiences of Arrival in the UK

Method of arrival was not an area of questioning in our survey, however in some conversations the topic arose. Some of those we interviewed had undertaken significant personal risk to arrive in the UK, others had travelled conventionally and declared their asylum claims on arrival at a UK airport. Our research was concerned with arrival in the UK in respect of 'first contacts'.

On arrival in the UK, 40% of the respondents said they made contact directly with the Home Office. Others told us their initial contact had been with the police (13%), some had gone to their own accommodation in hotels or hostels (7%), others said they had at first gone to friends (10%) and 10% said strangers had helped them. 7% reported that they had been taken to a refugee facility/detention centre. Only one person from our 50 respondents said they had been exploited in some way on arrival in the UK. Recounts of initial contact with the police were overwhelmingly positive with people saying they felt safe with the police.

We asked all the respondents which of the following services had been helpful since their arrival in the UK. The services are listed here with a 'star' shown each time they were mentioned as "helpful" by the respondent.

Service / Facility	Use of Service	
Local GP	*****	68%
Peer support	*****	24%
Professional Support worker	*****	26%
Befriending eg. Sponsor /Helpful neighbour	*****	12%
Specific Therapies	**	4%
English Classes	*****	34%
Organised activities (Non-sport)	*****	10%
Organised activities (Sport)	*****	28%
Volunteering	*****	20%

As all the discussions took place at one or the local refugee support groups, it can be taken that all these groups are providing a meaningful support service.

It is clear that in the Croydon area, many of these respondents had been successfully linked up to medical services, often through their local GP. It is thought that the local agencies have been particularly vigilant in helping medical needs to be met.

The 34% response rate for English classes can be attributed in large part to the role of John Ruskin College in Croydon providing Education Courses including English classes for the young people we spoke to at the Young Roots support group. In a similar way, the opportunities for interaction through sport arose exclusively from the Young Roots group or Ruskin College. One person had linked up to a boxing gym. When asking about sport, there were a number of people who lamented the absence of opportunities to play sport in groups, especially from a number of younger males who specifically mentioned a desire to play cricket.

Of those people who mentioned that they had been able to volunteer in some capacity, it was almost exclusively the case that they were doing this in one of the groups in which we conducted these interviews. It was noticeable that these volunteers were amongst the most positive we met in terms of outlook and how they felt about their lives. In the absence of the possibility of work during the asylum process, this would seem to be an area of opportunity to give asylum seekers a way of contributing and a sense of purpose. Many of these people have reached this point of seeking asylum by showing considerable resourcefulness, resilience and determination – qualities which can be useful in volunteer roles and in supporting others. Indeed, nearly a quarter of our respondents talked about a peer who had acted as mentor, guide or supporter in some capacity since their arrival in the UK.

What has been the single most helpful point of contact for you since you arrived in the UK?

We went on to ask about the single most helpful resource and the results were as follows:

Organisation	Quoted as "most helpful"	Comments
Friends and Family	***	
CRISIS	***	
Refugee Day Centre	*****	
Migrant Help	*****	
Refugee Council	***	
School/College	***	
Croydon Voluntary Action	**	
RAPAR	*	Manchester based
Happy Baby	*****	
"Christine's Football Sessions"	*	
NHS Rainbow Centre	*	
Salvation Army Shop	*	
Church	***	
Foster Carer	*	
Rainbows across borders	**	
National Asylum Support	*	(Home Office)
Sanctuary Hosting	*	(Formerly "Host")

It should be noted that a few respondents declined to answer, feeling there was no one "most helpful" and two people became very emotional and were not able to provide an answer. This table does not represent a ranking of 'who does the best job' and the higher rates of mention are, unsurprisingly, related to the places where our interviews took place. Of most relevance here is that there are 17 different places listed. In many cases, there was an individual person who had established a bond of trust with the asylum seeker and provided help, advice and reassurance.

"RAPAR in Manchester was helpful (three names mentioned). They listened to me"
(the respondent smiled for the first time in the interview).

"My experience with "Host" was the most significant thing that happened to me".
Female settled status – 6 Years in UK.

Which Services have been “less helpful” since your time in the UK?

A number of respondents were reluctant to answer this question, usually because they did not want to seem critical or ungrateful. As many people declined to comment as mentioned the most frequent problem; accommodation. Others were wary of the question as they were in the process of applications and Home Office meetings and did not wish to jeopardise their claim.

There were two dominant themes. The first was that relating to accommodation and the second relating to difficulties of dealing with the Home Office and the time taken for applications to be processed.

“Housing. My kids have asthma, housing is poor quality.”

Albanian female 45-54 – UK Citizen. (Mother of 2 teenage children).

“Accommodation. The house is wooden (bare floorboards). It is noisy and the smell of weed is horrible, it is everywhere”.

Afghan male 18-24 – Refugee status.

“Housing. I have no place to stay for 3 years. I move around.” (“You are homeless?”). “Yes.”

Afghan male – minor. Refugee status unclear. “Home Office.

They made me wait 7 hours when I was 8 ½ months pregnant. It was one of the most difficult days.”

Albanian Female 25-34 BA Law. Asylum application in process.

“This process of registration is very hard for a qualified person. I want to work. There is no training available for us”.

Syrian male 45-54 Phd / post-doctorate - Pharmacology . Asylum application in process.

How Could Services be Improved?

The respondents were asked which of the services they had access could be improved. In rank order they identified:

- Accommodation support
- Advisory Services (from social workers, counsellors and other advisors)
- Mental health and well-being
- Improving access to activities and sports
- Economic and work opportunities
- Food and clothing
- Education and language support
- Legal help and advice

Reading through all the comments uncovers some interesting aspects of the motivations behind them. There was a strong bias towards seeking independence and wanting advice on how to achieve it. As a cohort, these were not people claiming to be helpless and wanting things done for them. Their motivations were to become independent from support and they wanted to know how to get to that point. The desire to work and to contribute was high and this was seen as they key to becoming financially independent. It was interesting that at no time did any respondent ask for or expect state government support financially. Nobody asked for money.

Organisation	Quoted as "most helpful"	Comments
Friends and Family	***	
CRISIS	***	
Refugee Day Centre	*****	
Migrant Help	*****	
Refugee Council	***	
School/College	***	
Croydon Voluntary Action	**	
RAPAR	*	Manchester based
Happy Baby	*****	
"Christine's Football Sessions"	*	
NHS Rainbow Centre	*	
Salvation Army Shop	*	
Church	***	
Foster Carer	*	
Rainbows across borders	**	
National Asylum Support	*	(Home Office)
Sanctuary Hosting	*	(Formerly "Host")

Did you feel welcome on arrival in the UK?

Nearly half the refugees said they felt welcome, however, it is interesting that many made the distinction (directly or indirectly) between being welcomed and feeling safe. For many the UK felt safe relative to the environment from which they fled.

"WHEN I ARRIVED, I CAME FROM A VERY, VERY BAD EXPERIENCE. I DID NOT KNOW ANYONE BUT NOW I THINK BRITISH PEOPLE ARE FRIENDLY TO EACH OTHER, BUT THEY DON'T REALLY TALK TOME."

Albanian female 18-35 -
Leave to remain (escaped sex slavery)

"YES, I AM SAFE NOW BECAUSE YOU HAVE GOOD LAWS AND YOU MUST FOLLOW THE LAW"

Sri Lankan male 35-44 -
Leave to remain granted after 7-year process during which time much was spent homeless sleeping rough

"...I WILL NOT SAY THERE HAS BEEN A HUGE WELCOME, BUT PEOPLE HAVE HELPED US. I THINK THERE IS EMPATHY IN BRITISH PEOPLE, AT LEAST SOME AND I WANT TO SAY WE APPRECIATE THAT".

Syrian male 45-54
Asylum seeker
application in progress

"I DID NOT FEEL WELCOME INITIALLY, BUT NOW I FEEL WELCOME, FEELS SAFER, SLEEP BETTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE IS BETTER".

Ugandan male 18-24
Asylum seeker
application in progress



Chapter 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

**“I HAVE THE RIGHT OF NOTHING. I HAVE NO OPTIONS.
ADAPTING IS NOT ABOUT BEING FORCED INTO A
CHOICE”. SAIF, 24 - AFGHANISTAN**

Based on the data collected by the migrant-led organisations survey and the main research piece conducted by the Forum and engaging with 50 persons from asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds, we would make the recommendations (below) based on findings and first-hand testimonials.

Key stakeholders need to become aware of their responsibilities and recognise in order to improve our welcome, in terms of integration and prospects for those seeking sanctuary in Croydon, there is a long way to go. The process of participation and integration of persons seeking sanctuary does not end with the fulfilment of the action points below, rather it is an ongoing process, creating spaces and services to improve outcomes. It requires a commitment to socially investing in this often invisible group of our local population. Integration support measures, whether at the regional, national or local level, should therefore be underpinned by a fundamental understanding that each individual brings with them strengths and skills that can help them thrive in their new home, and be designed to empower them to make the most of this potential[40].

In order to better facilitate integration and meet the needs of persons seeking sanctuary we make a number of recommendations which can be utilised by the public, volunteers, voluntary and statutory sectors to make change and work in solidarity. This Chapter serves to provide guidance for service provision and support, policy and community strategies which should not exclude those seeking sanctuary. Please note all the quotes within this Chapter are directly from refugees we interviewed and serve to set the scene for each recommendation; it is directly informed by those seeking sanctuary.

**MENTAL
HEALTH &
COUNSELLING**

HEALTHCARE

**LEGAL HELP &
ADVICE**

**ACCESS TO
SOCIAL
ACTIVITIES &
WELL - BEING**

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED IN:

**EDUCATION &
ESOL
LANGUAGE
SUPPORT**

**ECONOMIC &
WORK
OPPORTUNITIES**

**ACCOMMODA-
TION SUPPORT**

**ADVISORY
SERVICES**

**INTEGRATION AND
INCORPORATING
REFUGEE VOICES**

MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELLING

“I WAS SO DEPRESSED, I MISSED MY WIFE MY BABY DAUGHTER. I WAS ALONE, THERE WAS NO WELCOME JUST MOVE FROM PLACE TO PLACE AND WAITING AND WAITING”. ERVIN, 39 - IRAN

Persons seeking sanctuary undoubtedly experience trauma and the effects on mental health vary considerably. During the course of our research and conversations we discovered often refugees felt their mental health worsened due to the asylum waiting process, lack of social activities and missing family. A female asylum seeker from Albania stated she would like therapy **“would like, but expensive if available!”**, a respondent from Iran stated she did not access counselling and instead **“I tried to make myself busy by helping others”**. Refugees present high prevalence rates of trauma-related mental disorders and despite their psychological impairment, they are expected to meet high functional requirements in terms of social integration and financial independence. An asylum seeker from Iran told us **“I’m nervous, I have depression because I’m waiting for the answer”**. The most common disorders among refugees are post-traumatic stress disorder and major depression, trauma and loss therefore psychological impairment in treatment-seeking traumatized refugees is associated with poor integration[41].

An observation by one of our Researchers is worth noting: **“being a refugee and the path that some people take comes with its own trauma. In my experience, counselling services will not be utilised by refugees to solve that trauma. One of the reasons is that collectivist cultures perceive talking about your problems with a professional as being selfish and self-indulgent. So, before it develops into something worse, (possibly depression) the Council can intervene by working with community leaders to create and launch a programme/ intervention that is suitable for the people involved. Since an unaccompanied young person may have different needs compared to a refugee aged 30+”**[42]. Research confirms that asylum seekers present higher rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression than other refugees, due to post migratory stresses, delays in the application process, conflicts with immigration officials, denial of work permits, unemployment, and separation from families. Forced migrants often arrive in places where they have no contacts and or knowledge of the language which contribute further to increased isolation and limited opportunities[43]. Hence mental health and counselling services in Croydon need to be fit for purpose and take into account the unique circumstances and situation of those seeking sanctuary find themselves in. Our migrant-led survey illustrated many persons seeking sanctuary access services for emotional and social support. This is often informal with few services locally catering specifically for this group.

A lady from Somalia told us “...I need some advice and someone to talk. I don't think I am happy at the moment with my life”. There needs to be urgent investment into local mental health and counselling infrastructure to enable recovery and integration for refugees. The services need to be accessible, cost effective and long-term. The task of the mental health professionals and the assistance offered needs to focus on helping the patients achieve their goals, as part of a wider multi-sector collaboration with social workers, refugee organizations, housing and employment agencies[44]. Another scaling-up mental health and psychosocial intervention with refugee populations is e-mental health apps - interventions through smart phones which could reach people in Croydon that would not have access to mental health treatment[45].

EDUCATION AND ESOL LANGUAGE SUPPORT

“EARLY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN, NEED GUIDANCE, WE ARE BEHIND IN SCHOOL, WE DO NOT KNOW ENGLISH, WE ARE ALONE. THERE WAS CULTURAL SHOCK. I WAS BULLIED AT SCHOOL, BUT MY FOSTER CARER WAS NICE. WE NEED MORE WELL-BEING ACTIVITIES SO I CAN KEEP HAPPY”.

MAHAN, 19 - AFGHANISTAN

A shortage of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, prevents refugees from being able to access other areas of support, from gaining employment and from taking part in community activities. There was drastic reduction in ESOL funding in England – a 55% fall between 2008-09 and 2014-15[46]. A key emerging and recurring theme was the lack of access to affordable education opportunities. Across the country access to ESOL is becoming increasingly limited. Persons seeking sanctuary are reliant on informal education formats to learn English, the quality of programmes varies and is often ad-hoc dependent on volunteer contributions and time commitment. Whilst this serves to fill some of the deficit in learning English, it by no means prepares refugees to undertake exams or pass standardised English tests for employment purposes. Communication is the cornerstone of integration. Investment into ESOL is central to achieving this goal. This also means ESOL sessions that cater for mothers and families with young children.

Primary education is free and available for children of school age. However, conversations with those who recently left care during our interview revealed some of the participants felt they needed 'supplementary' help their Schools were unable to provide, they arrived in School at a time when their English was poor and were expected to undertake GCSE's within 2-3 years of arrival often from conflict prone zones and as a result were at a distinct disadvantage compared to their peers, this subsequently led to poor academic performance and limited opportunities to access higher and further education.

Studies indicate refugee families underutilize formal mental health services, schools can have a key role to play in identifying problems and facilitating access to appropriate care[47]. The NEU (National Education Union) confirm that schools are having to find ways to support vulnerable children who urgently need professional mental health interventions, they affirmed there is a lack of centralised focus on how best to support refugee children in schools, including a lack sharing of best practice and training material[48]. None of the respondents (those who arrived as unaccompanied minors) we spoke to were offered specialist mental support or care within Croydon schools. A young Afghan respondent told us **"make it easier to access the education system. I would like to access sport, boxing and football. You need money to access things"**. Another young person from Afghanistan added **"education support at College could be better. More advice needed, more one on one help needed"**.

We strongly recommend schools and colleges undertake steps to ensure children seeking sanctuary have access to additional help, that teachers and staff engage with them to determine their needs and that arrangements are made for counselling and/or pastoral support as well as activities such as sport. Furthermore, for school leavers there ought to be access to vocational schemes, training and foundation courses providing children with the opportunity to access the job market and education in alternative formats. Combining work and language opportunities should be considered in addition to basic language training in order to facilitate labour market entry and to speed up further language development. Opportunities could include volunteering, internships, work experience and apprenticeships[49].

ESOL is paramount for adults with an asylum seeker from Kuwait telling us **"I had difficulties for the language to speak with the GP, but they have translators. Also, was difficult for the language in council and jobcentre"**. Lack of English language skills limit communication with key agencies to access support and universal credit. A professional from Syria added **"teach people English as soon as possible, train us, invest in talent. This will help integration; the language is the first step. We are capable people, we can work pay tax. Give us a chance"**.

HEALTHCARE

“HOSPITALS TREAT WOMEN LIKE ME (TRAFFICKED) DIFFERENTLY. WHEN MY SON WAS SICK, THE HOSPITAL SAID THEY DON’T HAVE AN INTERPRETER AND I COULD NOT EXPLAIN WHAT WAS WRONG. I AM TRAFFICKED AND NOT BRITISH, IT IS NOT THE SAME FOR US” NORA, 21 - ALBANIA

Refugees health is a fundamental issue influencing many aspects of the integration process. It was heartening that health care emerged as one of the stronger areas of provision for our respondents, however our extended discussions revealed areas that could be improved. Those seeking sanctuary are entitled to free healthcare and prescriptions, however, there will be elements of treatments they may not be available to them. Family separation has a considerable psychological impact, especially on parents separated from their spouse and/or children, while concerns about the safety of family members also causes considerable stress, this was all communicated to us during the interview process. Additionally, physical health concerns are common, and before refugees can begin to think about building a future, torture, gender-based abuse, and injuries during conflict require medical attention and counselling. Obstacles to healthcare and medication would clearly impact upon an individual's ability to function in everyday life[50]. Our research showed that the majority of refugees were able to access basic healthcare (GPs) and obtain prescriptions, this was easier for those in large Home Office accommodation whilst others found it challenging to register with GP surgeries. Discussions with new mothers revealed a diverse scale of experiences ranging from excellent maternal and post-natal health care to those that were unable to communicate theirs, have access to an interpreter and struggled to buy neo-natal vitamins as well as struggles during the birthing process and lack of support thereof. Arman a new arrival from Iran (claiming asylum), is 37 and told us **“Doctor not good, I have infection, he give only paracetamol”**, he was unable to explain himself in English to the GP and provide details about his ailment. Healthcare is a basic human right afforded to every human being, Croydon needs to ensure local healthcare staff demonstrate compassion, care and competence in regards to refugees, this may involve culture-sensitive awareness, becoming acquainted with the process and experiences of refugees and working with local CCG's and senior management to ensure translators are available and staff treat all patients 'equally' irrespective of background. The Department of Health should work with local Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure that all healthcare professionals are aware of the entitlements refugees have to NHS treatment and the forms of documentation refugees are likely to be able to provide. Clinical Commission Groups should review the availability of mental and physical health services available to refugees within their area and incorporate the findings of those reviews into future commissioning decisions and if the Home Office should identify refugees as having a particular health need the local authority and commissioning group should be informed[51].

ECONOMIC & WORK OPPORTUNITIES

“THIS PROCESS OF WAITING IS VERY HARD FOR A QUALIFIED PERSON (PHARMACOLOGY LECTURER), I WANT TO WORK. NO TRAINING OR EDUCATION FOR US”. LAITH, 45 - SYRIA

Employment is the most important factor in securing the integration of migrants into society as it enables interactions, increases opportunities for learning local language and it provides the opportunity to build a future and to regain confidence, refugees who are working adjust more easily to the host society than those who are unemployed[52]. As one respondent stated, **“once you are welcomed, have some way to use people - don't dump them, let me contribute”**. Inability to locate work and underemployment are the most significant barriers to successful integration of refugees into society, many persons seeking sanctuary struggle to find work that utilises their professional skills and qualification levels causing a downward professional mobility spiral. Acquiring refugee status also means acquiring the legal right to enter the labour market without restrictions, yet the process is littered with challenges including, for example, loss of identity documentation and qualification certificates, trauma and uncertainty, anxiety over family separation, and the long period of inactivity in the asylum system. These issues are compounded by a new set of barriers such as job availability, familiarity with the local employment market, knowledge of the language, and qualifications recognition[53]. The persons we spoke to during the course of our interviews were eager to work and contribute locally, however, they are not permitted to work whilst their asylum claim is being processed, this can take up to a year plus. Refugees are generally not permitted to work whilst awaiting a decision. They can only apply for permission to fill a shortage vacancy (Government's shortage occupation list) if they have been waiting for over twelve months for an initial decision on their asylum claim. The shortage list requires specialist knowledge and training, including chemical engineers, computer animators and skilled classical ballet dancers. This immediately blocks the majority of refugees from employment[54].

Additionally, those that had successful claims found it hard to navigate the UK job market without the knowledge, connection and networking to secure roles. An asylum seeker from Sudan told us he **“wants to work!” After college has time (to work) but can't do it. Money is difficult, £15 a week is not much”**. This was mirrored by an Afghani male **“I want to work - other people my age, they work and I know they look at me ...(because I don't work)”**.

A number of respondents also cited qualifications from their native countries did not meet UK standards and their need to find urgent housing meant they were willing to take up any work that become available, this often acted a barrier to accessing or exploring more lucrative employment opportunities commiserate with their skill set.

There need to be provisions in place locally to ensure refugees have equal opportunities to access the job market by facilitating volunteering opportunities, apprentice schemes, awareness of scholarships, creation of job schemes that give them an equal chance, investment into getting refugees into work and encouraging local businesses to extend training opportunities. Mentorship schemes and entrepreneurial endeavours should be promoted. Newly arrived migrants have a wealth of experience and skills, could make significant contributions toward the social and economic prosperity of Croydon. The will to work is there, as one respondent told us, **'I try to work as much as possible to improve my life and for my kids'**. Our research indicated respondents were keen to work and thrive.

LEGAL HELP AND ADVICE

"I LOST TWO YEARS IN MY APPLICATION PROCESS WHEN IASS CLOSED. THERE WAS NO INFORMATION OR GUIDANCE WHEN REGISTERING FOR LEGAL HELP. SOME REPRESENTATION WOULD HAVE BEEN HELPFUL. SOME MONEY WOULD HAVE HELPED". RAJIN, 41 - SRI LANKA

Poor legal advice can make the difference between someone having a successful asylum claim or being subject to deportation. The lack of investment into legal aid and fair access to justice means often those claiming asylum are short-changed. They are unable to afford the high fees charged by private law firms. Those that manage to secure legal aid funding for their claim find themselves hindered by inexperienced legal staff with some respondents stating their claims were being managed by 'caseworkers' as opposed to qualified Solicitors. Additionally, they reported a distinct lack of communication by solicitor firms and follow up with the Home Office. Several persons we spoke to stated their solicitor did not attend their substantive asylum interview with them. One of the Afghani respondents told us **"the difficulties of not having (refugee) status is stressful. I was sent to a detention centre in 2018 near Gatwick, I was 24. Was supported by solicitor but cost £4,000 – I did not have legal aid"**. This was echoed by an asylum seeker from Sudan who added he needed help with **"how to get the application process started. Took lots of effort (himself) - was difficult"**. All of these factors serve to disadvantage those seeking sanctuary, many do not have the legal know-how to represent their case and rely on legal professionals to ensure their journey, case and facts are presented judiciously. Those especially affected were young people leaving care. One of the charities as part of the migration led survey stated 'legal advice for complex immigration and asylum claims' is necessary. Those with more complex cases and circumstances require specialist representation.

There needs to be sectorial encouragement for more pro-bono representation, arranging legal advice for specialist cases, surgeries for questions, general information 'on their rights' including legal jargon translated into community languages and working with community groups and charities to find new ways to ensure enhanced legal representation for refugees and asylum seekers. Without doing so, their chances of a successful claim are greatly hindered.

Many of the refugees have complex claims especially those pertaining to age assessments, as one Afghani young person detailed, **"...it took 18 months to believe my age, it took six age assessments. It was upsetting, each assessment took 4/5 hours. I was angry and frightened...still talking to Home Office and still trying to establish claim because they do not believe country of origin (Afghanistan), arrived from Iran - with no papers"**. Hence the need for more specialist legal help is imperative. Additionally, around 10% of respondents were victims of trafficking and modern slavery, requiring legal advice tailored to this area of law. Connecting with organisations such the local Law Centre and the CAB can be fruitful and both are agencies utilised by those seeking sanctuary, however, there needs to be substantial funding directed toward the aforementioned organisations to help them cope with demand and develop scope for specialist legal support. Many of the refugees spoke of the impact of waiting times, some of them had waited over 18 months for a decision by the Home Office. A male from Uganda seeking asylum stated **"more information (is needed). Dispersal is very scary, don't know when or where you are going. The wait for status affects mental health"**. A refugee from Sudan sums up **"make the process short. It is not easy being a migrant. Take us seriously. We left for a lot of good reasons"**. This frustration was echoed by a number of persons; heightened by lack of activities and social isolation.

ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

"PLEASE FIND ME SOMEWHERE TO LIVE". JAMAL, 18 - SUDAN

Refugees struggle with accessing suitable, affordable, secure, independent housing, reasons include landlords' reluctance to rent to refugees, the urgency with which refugees must leave housing after recognition of status, refugees' lack of employment and therefore of secure income, particularly in the transition phase, a lack of security deposit, or work contract. These trends are in keeping with experiences of refugees and those settling in Croydon. Refugees often worry about accommodation for themselves and families from the start of the asylum process. An Albanian mother with a new born told us **"I need clothes for my baby, she needs shoes and a bed (Moses basket) and what will the decision from home office, where I will live, these are my worries. I can't sleep."** Often issues of housing are interrelated with other needs.

A number of the respondents who had secured settled status explained the transition period after being granted refugee status was fraught with difficulty and stress. They were under pressure to leave their accommodation and reliance on social housing was limited, private options were equally limiting as landlords were reluctant to accept tenants on universal credit. The pressure often led them to accept poor housing in locations that were problematic, rely on friends and even risk homelessness. Housing is the cornerstone to rebuild their lives and provide the semblance of stability to themselves and their families that has often been missing for a number of years. Suitable and affordable accommodation remains a significant barrier and a crucial obstacle for integration. Landlord requirements such as references, bank statements and proof of work all act as hurdles and in some cases blockades to access housing. Often those who have newly acquired status cannot provide this documentation. Moreover, the UK's dispersal policy means those with newly acquired status (as well as those claiming asylum) are dispersed to both urban and rural areas without regard for their needs, refugees reported feeling isolated, unable to access cultural foods, find places of worship or residents who spoke their native language. Insaf, an Afghani male (under 18) told us **"I have no place to stay for 3 years. I stay with my friends, different ones, I move around." (You are homeless?) – "yes"**. A single mother from Albania said **"(my) kids have asthma, housing is poor quality. Croydon Council is difficult to deal with"**.

Croydon needs to ensure those who settle within the Borough are supported to access affordable housing and the Council works to ensure they are not rendered 'homeless', that the duty to ensure safe accommodation extends to those seeking sanctuary and with newly secured status. They need to ensure they undertake follow-up work with unaccompanied minors and those in the foster care system to avoid tragic cases such as Insaf. There need to be measures in place to create greater awareness among landlords and social housing authorities about the limitations for refugees to meet standard housing requirements, this would assist refugees in gaining access to suitable and affordable housing in a timely manner. Those rendered homeless often face additional danger on the streets as one respondent told us **"yes, it is difficult when you are on the streets. I got beaten and robbed a lot and lost my money and documents several times. (showed Researcher injuries - lost an ear to an attack with a broken bottle, lost teeth due to a beating whilst on the streets)**. Better information should be considered as part of integration support and education on part of housing staff – those seeking asylum whether successful or not should be left to fend for themselves on the streets. Upon granting of settled status, a good practice could be for refugees to have access to a guarantor scheme for an initial period during which they would be able to establish themselves[55].

ACCESS TO SOCIAL ACTIVITIES & WELL - BEING

“FREE ACTIVITIES FOR US, WE HAVE NO MONEY. ESOL CLASSES NEAR US AS TRAVEL IS EXPENSIVE. ALSO, ACCOMMODATION IN CROYDON IS DIRTY, SO MANY PROBLEMS I CANNOT SAY ALL OF THEM, BUT IT IS NOISY AND MOULDY. IMPROVE AGE ASSESSMENT, MY EXPERIENCE WAS NOT GOOD”.

ISAAC, 19 - GUINEA

Social connections and activities greatly affect the ability of those seeking sanctuary to feel a sense of belonging, well-being and managing stress. Many of the respondents we spoke to felt restless and impatient at the delays in their asylum application, they spent days in cramped rooms mentally revisiting their experiences and traumatic journeys. An Iranian seeking asylum summed up his experience as **“don't move us again and again, let us settle. Let us do activities, I am bored and alone, I just stare at walls in my room like prison”**. The lack of social connectivity hinders integration and recovery.

The voluntary sector in Croydon has made great strides in running a range of activities from mother and baby groups, donating goods, providing hot meals, advice, sports and physical activities, signposting to cultural events, artistic and musical projects and the opportunity to participate in events such as Refugee Week. This greatly enhances the well-being of those seeking sanctuary and newly arrived persons in Croydon, such efforts are almost entirely led by the voluntary sector. However, activities can be ad-hoc and subject to funding, childcare may not be available and there may be cultural barriers to access sport and artistic programmes.

Furthermore, many new arrivals are not aware of where activities are taking place and some lack the confidence to venture to a new location and participate. A settled former refugee from the Balkans told us **“social activities for people and access donations for basics as home office do not give anything (is needed). Also I cannot find affordable accommodation, I was on hostels for few years and even now I work part-time many don't rent to me. We need better accommodation for migrants”**. Croydon Council host events and activities for unaccompanied minors and young asylum seekers however, there is a dearth of investment for children and those twenty-one and over. More funding and attention needs to be directed toward social and cultural events that are accessible to all as well as a wider public health awareness that such activities serve to mitigate mental health concerns and aid well-being.

ADVISORY SERVICES (SUCH AS UNDERSTANDING UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND CAREER ADVICE)

“MORE HELP WITH CAREER ADVICE AS I AM WORKING AS A CLEANER NOW BUT I COULD A LOT MORE”. EDEN, 29 - ERITREA

Many of the respondents needed additional help, presented complex needs and faced challenges such as accessing food and clothing. A young person appealing his asylum decision stated **“after foster care, I do not have papers so it is hard to access. When I arrived in London I felt like a mute. I had no English. Do not ask me when I last shopped for clothes. Now I use a food bank as I cannot afford much, I feel bad what they give me, but use it”**. This shows the need for additional support around accessing basics such as food and clothing, as explained above, after leaving foster care, he was forced to rely on charity including food banks to make ends meet. This is a hugely damaging and precarious situation for a young person to find themselves in. The Job Centre plays a crucial role in the first steps for refugees to start their new life with secured status, however, studies have found job Centre staff who are dealing with refugees do not always provide the right information and or have awareness of the correct procedures leading to delays in refugees being able to access support[56].

Applications for universal credit have to be made online and require applicants to show bank details and a national insurance number, both of these requirements can be difficult for newly recognised refugees to meet. A father from Iran who had newly secured told us **“there were problems in the jobcentre. I also had electricity and water supply problems”**. An engineer from Iran added **“I want to work now I have my papers, the job centre do not help, just pressure me”**. Furthermore, some of the respondents expressed the need for advice and guidance to access career support, job market/agencies and further education to help them increase their skills. Local job support agencies and recruiters should set quotas to aid those who have secured status to work. A former journalist from Iran stated **“it took time for me to understand how to use my (professional) skills. There is no formal help in this”**. There is clearly a desire from refugees to learn, educate and contribute as a teacher from Iran told us; **“I am a teacher, I like to teach and learn, I want to do this again. I have nothing to do but look at walls”**.

Integration and Incorporating Refugee Voices

“THERE IS A NEED FOR EXPERTS, EDUCATE US, TRAIN US. WE HAVE NO MONEY WE CANNOT DO CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, HOW WE CAN GET MONEY TO TRAVEL TO SEE A MUSEUM, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE. WE ARE IN A STATE OF STRESS ALL OF US. THE HYGIENE CONDITIONS IN THE ACCOMMODATION IS APPALLING. THE LENGTH OF WAITING FOR HOME OFFICE DECISION IS PURELY DEPRESSING”.

LAITH, 45 – SYRIA

Integration is complicated and refers to economic, health, racial, education and social contexts. Multiple factors contribute to how smooth refugees' integration occurs, including their experiences, their physical and mental health and social support. There is in general a lack of understanding of the diversity and the range of experiences refugees bring with them and Croydon is no different. A film maker from Iran stated **“I need a person that could link me with everything. The connection are really important. I need a person for the emotional support and I feel to represent many refugees. Because the problems are worse in Europe. They (the refugees) miss home but ask the right to be treated as human”**. There are a myriad of obstacles to integration that refugees face. Some of the major impediments to integration are racism and ignorance experienced at both the personal and institutional levels[57]. One of our researchers who has undergone the asylum process herself reiterates that getting the community and community leaders (in a representative capacity) involved in programmes for integration and welcome is key. As a Borough, we need to engage with these leaders and encourage them to get targeted persons involved. This allows those seeking sanctuary to become active participants instead of passively accepting their situation, thereby empowering refugees and generating trust. There are benefits for Croydon Council; potentially reducing workload as the refugees take initiatives and help their communities by themselves. Furthermore, asking that refugees and asylum-seekers assimilate to their new surroundings without recognising the role played by the receiving community in Croydon in all its constituent parts does not take into account, let alone address, structural barriers, hostility or discrimination, and therefore does not facilitate full participation in society[58]. As a Borough, we need to keep such factors in mind and improve our welcome especially at the statutory and institutional levels.

The literature, as well as our research exercise, suggests refugees are often isolated and therefore face challenges forming friendships or connections with members of the receiving population. This can arise from language ability, cultural differences, such as preferring not to socialize in pubs and bars, uncertainty of cultural norms, fear of rejection or experiences of racism, time and psychological limitations connected to concerns about nuances, employment, housing and family separation, segregation in larger cities, and age and poor emotional health



Depression and anxiety can result from these factors and further impact an individual's ability to connect[59]. Strong partnerships with partners rooted in local communities are key to understanding and aiding integration. It is important that voluntary and statutory sector strategies incorporate the voices of those seeking sanctuary, as they are best placed to advise on beneficiary needs and strengths and can act as connectors with partners, groups and charities to ensure enthusiasm and goodwill are transformed into projects that meet needs and are at the same time cost and resource efficient[60]. We have a long way to go, as one victim of trafficking seeking asylum described, **“when I arrived I came from a very very bad experience. I did not know anyone but now I think British people are friendly to each other, but they don't really talk to me”**. Social integration is not a one-way street; strong anti-discrimination framework and promotion of intercultural dialogue should be included in strategies to promote active citizenship at all levels. Community engagement, such as sports clubs and recreational activities, should be promoted and facilitated and more funding should be directed toward these activities[61].

Support for Local Charities

The feedback for charities in Croydon was overwhelmingly positive. A male from Kuwait told us “I would like to have more places like the Refugee Day Centre”. A 54 old professional from Iran stated **“I had good experiences, Peter (Refugee Day Centre) help. When I arrived the police asked many questions”**. He also described Peter as ‘therapy’. Whilst his initial experience was not positive, his interaction with the Refugee Day Centre, as a space to socialise and support improved his outlook. A refugee from India stated **“I like coming here (drop-in at Refugee Day Centre) and talking to people”**.

“I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MORE PLACES LIKE THE REFUGEE DAY CENTRE”.

This demonstrates the importance of being able to socialise and just have a chat, many refugees arrive without family or social connections and places like the Refugee Day Centre and Young Roots can be a lifeline. A male from Africa told us Rainbows Across Borders (for refugees identifying as LGBTQI) **“advises me for the lawyer, the transport, medication (which are free) and clothes”**, showing that specialist services offered a range of advice. An engineer from Iran added, **“Migrant Help (charity) helps refugees in Croydon but it’s very busy, they found a home and money, they also provide a free lawyer”**. Another individual stated the translator at Refugee Day Centre had been helpful.

“I FOUND CHARITIES (HAPPY BABY) IN CROYDON, THEY SAVED ME”.

The young men at Young Roots, most them having arrived as unaccompanied minors described the drop-in evenings as a place to relax, make friends, persons from Asia, Africa and Britain side by side and share a meal and a chat. They also have the opportunity to play games, sports and seek advice – it is a crucial service especially for those transitioning from foster care to independence, one of the respondents told us **‘I cannot afford the gym’, but here was a place for him to do activities to take his ‘mind of stress’**. A young Albanian mother told us: **“the ones (charities like Happy Baby) have been all good for me and baby, we have some basics things now; before I had nothing only a small purse and dirty clothes and I was pregnant...the Happy Baby Leadership Programme (for refugee women) keeps me busy and not thinking about bad things”**. The local charities we connected with (Refugee Day Centre, Young Roots, Beats Learning and Happy Baby) are precious resources and provide support to refugees in many ways that cannot be quantified, they offer a lifeline, save lives, offering emotional and psychological support, advise, listening, connecting people, befriending, sharing, providing hot meals, coats for winter, shoes and nappies to name but a few items. They provide an ‘essential’ service, they show empathy and compassion, they welcome people from all walks of life without judgment. The quotes above are a testament to this.

**“Let us remember
that a bogus
asylum-seeker is not
equivalent to a
criminal; and that
an unsuccessful
asylum application
is not equivalent to a
bogus one”**

Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary

Future Research

A number of issues emerged during the course of this listening exercise and merit further investigation:

1

MATERNITY AND CHILDCARE

An area of support we were unable to investigate in detail was maternity cases and access to child care. There are **“more activities for mums with babies and social activities...”** advised a victim of trafficking from Albania, another added **“more activities for mums and babies, (we need) ways to keep busy”**. This is a potential area that needs to be analysed further to determine access, availability and knowledge of such services.

2

DIGITAL POVERTY

It was clear that many of the respondents were at a distinct disadvantage due to lack of access to wi-fi and many settled in accommodation where this was not available, not doubt this was exacerbated by COVID19. A female from Iran told us **“I don't have money to call my family in Iran, I don't have data on my phone and there is no wi-fi in the hostel”**.

3

VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

Almost 10% of the respondents had been trafficked into the UK, they require specialist care and support to recover from their ordeals. This is an area that deserves further research to help formulate support for victims of trafficking and modern slavery. As many potential victims of trafficking and modern day slavery undergo the asylum process and are in need of specialist support services.

4

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

A former unaccompanied minor pleaded **“please make better education and training for us, we need to learn English. Accommodation is so bad it has to change”**. **For some foster is good for others it is bad, I was lucky**. As unaccompanied minors are statutorily subject to foster care, all our respondents from Young Roots had experience of foster care in the past or presently.

5

DETENTION AND HOME OFFICE

A number of refugees outlined their experience with the Home Office and even detention. A pregnant Albanian victim of trafficking told us of her shocking ordeal **“the Home Office; they made me wait 7 hours when I was 8.5 months pregnant, it was one of the most difficult days”**. A female claiming asylum from Malaysia stated **“when I arrived at the airport they put me in the detention room and they search in the bags. I was in the detention room from 6 am until 6 pm. I claimed asylum in the detention but they did not listen to me. Then I had an interview...I needed my medication for anxiety and they did not allow me to take this medication. I have to take it in the morning”**. She added **“also in the detention room, the Custody Officer told me to put my clothes on, my jacket even though in the room was not cold. I was in a sleeveless shirt and this officer I think he was Indian and he told me that I should have respected the other man in the room. What did you do in that situation? I mean I did not want to put my jacket on while I was inside a room, I wanted to decide for myself and I was not offending anyone! I think that something has to change in the immigration department”**.

The issues around detention are well documented and worth considering in more detail with new arrivals into Croydon[62].





Conclusion

Concluding Remarks

“THERE COULD BE MORE ADVICE, MORE LISTENING, MORE CARING ABOUT PEOPLE”. AVALIE, 46 - IRAN

In order to facilitate welcome and integration, we need to start aiding refugees at the point of making an application as opposed to waiting until they have secured status and granted leave to remain. A new arrival from Iran stated **'let us learn English and let us work, we have no support, nothing to do. We are scared at this time, we just need kindness, we hear good things about UK peoples'**. Refugees come to the UK from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds and they should not be required to relinquish their cultural identity, true integration allows refugees to rebuild their lives and to make full use of their talents and abilities to take part in and contribute to British society[63].

The listening exercise showed there is an incredible amount of goodwill locally to help and welcome refugees and migrants. Croydon's voluntary sector has stepped in and provided support; from advice, accommodation, donations, support groups to accompanying refugees to appointments and Home Office interviews. The efforts of all the organisations and volunteers ought to be applauded and recognised, for working in an increasingly hostile environment, for embracing values of welcome and equality as well as working tirelessly on a daily basis to provide support for refugees and those seeking sanctuary in Croydon. Much of this work is built on volunteers offering their time and skills for free and the goodwill and donations of our population. We do realise there is more to do and hope the Forum can help champion the ideals of welcome and give voice to refugees and newly arrived migrants in Croydon to ensure we are doing our utmost to uphold principles of humanity and understanding. Sadly, lacking is a sustained effort from statutory authorities and local government. They may be meeting statutory requirements, for example Chapter 3 demonstrated the Council's strategy regarding unaccompanied minors, but what happens when the statutory duty is fulfilled? Is there sufficient or any follow up or sustained support thereafter? Unfortunately, it would seem to be limited and left to the voluntary sector to support these young adults who have come out of care. In order to become a Borough of Welcome, there needs to be a sustained effort at the statutory level and a commitment to make improvements.

In 2017 the APPG on Refugees recommended the creation of a Minister for Refugees, with responsibility for refugee integration and developing a National Refugee Integration Strategy in collaboration with civil society, faith groups and local authorities[64]. As of 2020 there has been no Minister appointed, highlighting the need to augment local efforts to support refugees with their involvement and input. The lack of a UK-wide national integration strategy has been a substantial hindrance both to the successful integration of refugees and to the welcome that refugees experience.

Concluding Remarks

In 2014 Scotland implemented the New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities bringing together cross-sectorial partners (including health, education, asylum, social security, local government and communities) resulting in better access to the job market, a reduction in the length of time refugees report being homeless and the amount of advocacy required to help refugees access services[65]. The Forum would encourage Croydon Council and charities to lead on creating a local strategy utilising the New Scots Strategy as a blueprint. Their 2018-2022 strategy focuses on seven thematic areas: needs of asylum seekers, employability and welfare rights, housing, education, language, health and well-being and communities, culture and social connections, it aims to recognise the skills, knowledge and resilience which refugees bring and aims to help people to settle, become part of the community, and pursue their ambitions[66].

Refugees face multiple challenges on arrival and throughout the asylum process. A young person from Guinea seeking asylum said we need **"free activities for us, we have no money. ESOL classes near us as travel is expensive. Also accommodation in Croydon is dirty, so many problems I cannot say all of them, but it is noisy and mould. Improve age assessment, my experience was not good"**. There is rarely one challenge, rather all the recommendations above apply to most individuals. A new arrival from Iran told us **"I am sad, miss family. I need lawyer, need shoes. I am scared of not accepting me of being returned to Iran, my life is ruined"**. A young male from Afghanistan listed his experiences **"my foster carer was lovely, I was ill with spinal injury from child(hood), lonely, bullied in school, I could not sleep when I arrived"**. This demonstrates refugees are often grappling with multiple issues and may need to access support from a range of organisations to meet different needs.

The listening exercise served as a significant exercise in engaging with refugees, listening to their opinions and providing a safe space to discuss their experiences that were both harrowing and inspiring. The time spent at Croydon Refugee Day Centre showed professionals, volunteers, former refugees and charity workers coming together to cook, sing and share stories. At Happy Baby and Young Roots we saw a commitment by citizens to support refugees by sharing a meal, providing leisure activities, the opportunity to talk and laugh. Across all four organisations there was a sense of people organising themselves to become interpreters, friends, informal counsellors, helpers and advisors. We should be proud as a Borough at this display of collective humanity. The Forum sincerely hopes the data and recommendations contained within this report can act as a blueprint for further action and encourage statutory actors to incorporate refugee voices into community strategies in the future.



Footnotes

- 1 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
- 2 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/european-union>
- 3 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
- 4 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/european-union>
- 5 <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/05/21/EU-new-pact-migration-asylum>
- 6 <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/quarterly-mixed-migration-update-europe-q2-2020>
- 7 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-53697517>
- 8 *ibid*
- 9 <https://reliefweb.int/report/united-kingdom-great-britain-and-northern-ireland/refugee-council-says-home-office-plans10>
- 10 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892085/disparities_review.pdf
- 11 https://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/biblio/documents/2017/budget-refugee-crisis-improving-migration-management_en.pdf
- 12 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/06/lets-talk-about-climate-migrants-not-climate-refugees/>
- 13 <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/facts-about-refugees/>
- 14 <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/asylum-in-the-uk.html>
- 15 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2020/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned>
- 16 *ibid*
- 17 <https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get>
- 18 <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/we-speak-up-for-change/improving-the-lives-of-refugees/ending-refugee-poverty>
- 19 *ibid*
- 20 see <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asylum-seekers-home-office-accommodation-migrant-help-ag180896.html> and <https://evidenceaid.org/poor-healthcare-poor-housing-how-asylum-seekers-are-dangerously-exposed-to-covid-19/>
- 21 *ibid*
- 22 <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/refugees-overseas-visitors-and-vulnerable-migrants/refugee-and-asylum-seeker-patient-health-toolkit/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-entitlement-to-nhs-care>
- 23 see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-understanding-the-impact-on-bame-communities>
- 24 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2020/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to>
- 25 *ibid*
- 26 <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/asylum-in-the-uk.html>
- 27 <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/quarterly-mixed-migration-update-europe-q2-2020>
- 28 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/helping-resettlement-refugees>
- 29 <https://cityofsanctuary.org>
- 30 <https://resetuk.org>
- 31 *ibid*
- 32 <https://helprefugees.campaign.gov.uk>
- 33 <https://www.croydonobservatory.org/population/>
- 34 https://www.croydonobservatory.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BOROUGH-PROFILE_JUN2020.pdf
- 35 p.3 https://www.croydonobservatory.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BOROUGH-PROFILE_JUN2020.pdf
- 36 <https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/community-support/refugees>
- 37 <https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/mayor/mayor-s-cabinet>
- 38 <https://southwark.cityofsanctuary.org>
- 39 <https://love.lambeth.gov.uk/refugee-week-2020/>
- 40 P.29 <https://www.rescue-uk.org/sites/default/files/document/1735/ircsurvivingtothriving-final.pdf>
- 41 P.12 https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf
- 42 Recommendation by LG (Croydon Refugees and New Communities Researcher)
- 43 https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf. See also see Stenmark, H. et al (2013), 'Treating PTSD in refugees and asylum seekers within the general health care system. A randomized controlled multicenter study' *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 51, 641-647. And Craig, T. (2009), 'Mental health care needs of refugees', *Psychiatry*, 8(9), p.351-354
- 44 *ibid*
- 45 p.13 *ibid*
- 46 P.6 https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/APPG_on_Refugees_-_Refugees_Welcome_report.pdf
- 47 https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf
- 48 APPG Refugees (2017), 'Refugees Welcome? The Experience of New Refugees in the UK', p.38 at https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/APPG_on_Refugees_-_Refugees_Welcome_report.pdf
- 49 p.123 <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>
- 50 P.130 <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>
- 51 APPG Refugees (2017), 'Refugees Welcome? The Experience of New Refugees in the UK', p.36 at https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/APPG_on_Refugees_-_Refugees_Welcome_report.pdf
- 52 p.11 https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf
- 53 p.122 <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>
- 54 APPG Refugees (2017), p.43-44
- 55 p.126 <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>
- 56 APPG Refugees (2017), p.17
- 57 p.11 https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf
- 58 P.25 <https://www.rescue-uk.org/sites/default/files/document/1735/ircsurvivingtothriving-final.pdf>
- 59 p.123 <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>
- 60 p.20-23 <https://www.rescue-uk.org/sites/default/files/document/1735/ircsurvivingtothriving-final.pdf>
- 61 p.125 <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>
- 62 For statistics see <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/immigration-detention-in-the-uk/>. Experiences of women <https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/women-for-refugee-women-reports-detained.pdf>
- 63 APPG Refugees (2017), p.28
- 64 APPG Refugees (2017), p.53
- 65 APPG Refugees (2017), p.48
- 66 <https://www.gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/>



In their own words...



**"Once you are welcomed,
have some way to use
people - don't dump them.
Let me contribute."**



**I want to work - other
people my age, they work
and I know they look at me"
...(because I don't work)**



**"...You have good laws -
you must follow the law
and the system. I am
safe now..."**



**"Support groups are really
important, the information
you get from them is good.
I try to work as much as
possible to improve my life
and for my kids"**



**"THERE IS LITTLE EMPATHY,
I HAVE NOT FELT WELCOME
AND THAT HURTS"**



**"AFTER 9 YEARS STILL
BRITISH PEOPLE REMIND ME
I AM AFGHANI AND NOT ONE
OF THEM"**

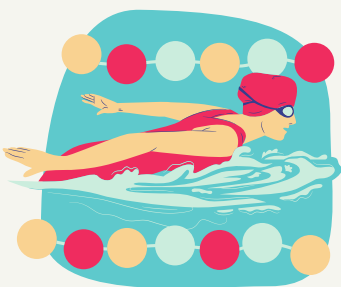
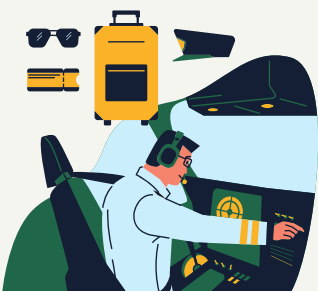
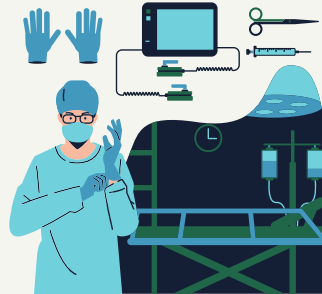


**"PEOPLE SHOULD HELP US
BECAUSE THEY WANT TO
NOT BECAUSE THEY THINK
IT IS DUTY"**



**"IT IS SIMPLE, I JUST WANT
TO FEEL SAFE AGAIN FOR
ME AND MY LITTLE BABY"**

REFUGEES HAVE MUCH TO CONTRIBUTE...AND DO...



THE LIVES LEFT BEHIND



“OWNED
BUSINESS,
HOTEL AND
RESTAURANT”

“I WAS WORKING
AS A SCHOOL
LIBRARIAN”

“SELLING SECOND-
HAND ITEMS ON
STREET SIDE”

“SECONDARY
SCHOOL
TEACHER”

“GEOGRAPHY
TEACHER”

“JEWELLERY
SHOP”

“MECHANICAL
ENGINEER”



“ELECTRICAL
ENGINEER – I HAD
MY OWN
CONSTRUCTION
BUSINESS”

“FILM MAKER”

“ENGINEER”

“I WAS WORKING
FOR A HUMAN
RIGHTS GROUP”

“JOURNALIST (TV
STATION), WRITER,
ACTIVIST

“PHARMACOLOGY
LECTURER”

“HOUSEWIFE”

“CLOTHES SHOP
MANAGER”



“SOMETIMES
WORKING –
WHATEVER YOU
COULD DO”

“I WAS A
STUDENT”

“COFFEE SHOP”

“AIR HOSTESS”

“BANK
MANAGER”

“PHONE
COMPANY”

“WORKED IN A
SCHOOL”

“I HAD A
PHOTOCOPY
SHOP”



Appendix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. What kind of services or advice does your organisation provide?														
Support including emotional	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Advice	x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x		x	
Food and/or Donations				x				x		x		x		
Legal											x			
Counselling and therapy							x		x					x
Drop In				x	x	x		x		x			x	
Education including informal learning	x		x	x	x			x	x		x		x	
Pastoral and/or Religious				x					x			x		
Befriending	x	x	x									x		
Advocacy		x			x				x	x	x	x	x	
Health & Well Being				x	x			x	x	x	x			x
Maternity Care														
Other: Mentoring									x					

2. How many people have benefitted from using your services in the last 12 months?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0-50	x	x												
51-100			x								x			
101-150							x			x				x
151-200									x					
201+								x					x	
500+														
1000+				x		x						x		
Other (please specify)														

3. What were migrants/refugees mainly seeking assistance with? You may list up to 5 responses.	1	2	3	4	5	6
A.	Business/Job advice	Access to education & ESOL	Accommodation	Clothes	Legal representation	Accommodation
B.	Befriending	Access to health services	Family Reunification	Food	Homelessness	Asylum Advice
C.	Project Support	Learning about London	Asylum Claims incl. Appeals	Baby Equipment	Age disputes	Asylum Support
D.		Access to sport service	English Classes	Advice	Access to physical and mental health services	Signposting to healthcare
E.		Access to legal services	Integration and Social Activities	Social Space	Access to education/college	Referral to NRM

3. What were migrants/refugees mainly seeking assistance with? You may list up to 5 responses.	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
A.	Emotional Support	Baby/maternity clothes/equipment	ESOL	Seeking Asylum	Safety, support & building of self esteem & confidence as LGBT+ asylum seekers	Food	Youth activities	Counselling
B.		Support around becoming a mother (including antenatal and postnatal education)	Bridging gap between Social services and Carer	Victims of Trafficking	Information & advice about the asylum process	Counselling	Learning English	
C.		Signposting and information services, primarily around asylum	Supporting Home Office Leave to Remain Application	Looked After Children	Relaxation exercises		Support to find accommodation	
D.			Holistic health and mental well-being support		Singing as a therapy, icebreaker & getting members working as a team		Support to find solicitor	
E.			Facilitate help from other support services		Outreach & campaigning		Casework support	

4. What support services would your service users benefit from?														
Mental Health & Counselling				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Health & Well Being	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	
Accommodation Support		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Education & Training	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Emotional Support		X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Social Activities	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	
Legal Advice	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Understanding how to access local services and support	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Understanding universal credit and eligibility	X			X		X			X		X	X	X	X
Other (please specify)					Legal advice for complex immigration and asylum claims & better leaving care support									

5. What are the main ethnic groups that have accessed your service over the past 12 months.														
Caribbean	x						x			x				
African	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Other Black Background				x						x				x
Bangladeshi							x					x		
Indian					x									
Pakistani	x				x		x		x			x		x
Persian (Iran & Afghanistan)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
Turkish					x							x		
Other Asian Background				x	x	x	x	x		x				x
Chinese							x		x	x				x
Central Asian					x		x				x			
Far East							x	x						
White British												x		
Irish												x		
Other White Background: Albanian					x				x	x	x	x		x
Other (please specify)" Kurdish			x								x			

6. What are the age groups you work with?														
0-11				x				x						
11 to 18			x	x	x		x		x	x			x	x
18-24	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
25-34	x			x		x		x		x	x	x		
35-44	x			x		x		x		x	x	x		
45-54	x			x		x					x	x		
55-65				x		x					x	x		
65+				x		x						x		

7. How connected do you feel to the rest of the voluntary sector in Croydon?														
A great deal														
A lot				x		x	x	x		x			x	
A moderate amount				x		x					x	x		x
A little	x								x					
None at all														
Other: no response														

8. How many people volunteer for your organisation per month															
0-10	X	X	X			X	X	X			X				X
11 to 25														X	
26-50				X					X				X		
50-100											X				
100+															

	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. How can the Croydon New Communities & Refugee Forum help your organisation in delivering services and welcoming new arrivals?	Having a platform to access info about other organisations in Croydon, upcoming events, services provided, collaboration portal, etc.	No response	Share about project available and referrals to our project (Refugee and Befriending). Cultural orientation including some sort of cultural mediation for newly arrived people, peer to peer support, not only to overcome language barrier but also cultural differences and feel less lonely - mental health is not always accepted and we should find ways around it to support people against isolation. Finding more Support for young people past 18 years of age	By creating and maintaining a database of all the Refugee services available in the borough; and making referrals between agencies as simple as possible	For unaccompanied minors, usually problems start when they hit 17-18 & their claims have been rejected. UASC need more quality legal advice and guidance to avoid dodgy solicitors (incl. in Croydon). Social workers and PAs also need more time and more training to work with such complex population. Support the campaign for asylum seekers to have the right to work, as this would take people out of destitution and provide some hope and stability while they are waiting for their case to be decided. The Forum can support our organisation by campaigning & lobbying locally to address these issues with key people in the area.	Mapping everything available Multilingual guidance

	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
9. How can the Croydon New Communities & Refugee Forum help your organisation in delivering services and welcoming new arrivals?	Join together with existing services to extend the reach and capacity available	By working on a strategic level to join up services for refugees across Croydon; by working on a strategic level to highlight and build awareness of structural failings and inadequacies in Home Office Initial Accommodation Units for Asylum Seekers - and the ongoing contract breaches by contract deliverers.	Build a directory of specialist support providers	Offering specialist support, counselling, immigration advise, mentoring and equipment	Membership is by its very nature mainly transitory. Once 'Granted' they tend understandably move on. This because the group is exclusive the LGBT+ asylum seekers means that the organisation often has to retrain newcomers to take on the admin duties.	No response	Work in partnership with other organisations, connect to make sure the young people we work with know about other opportunities in Croydon, get referrals	No response

S Raza

SENT BY EMAIL

Contact: Information Team
FOI@croydon.gov.uk
Our Ref: 1320590
Date: 30 January 2020

Dear S Raza

Freedom of Information Request

Your request has been considered under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Specifically, you have requested the following information:

Has Croydon Council funded any integration project(s) for adult refugee and/or asylum seekers in the last 5 years?

Croydon Council does not have any particular integration project for adult refugees and/or asylum seekers. Croydon Council complies with its statutory duties by providing support services to vulnerable adults with care and support needs under the Care Act 2014 and to vulnerable children with families under Children Act 1989.

Did Croydon accept any refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme?

Croydon Council is not a participant of the VPRS, so has no specific places to offer.

What is the number of refugee families settled in Croydon between January 2018 and December 2019.? And did any follow up work take place?

Croydon Council does not hold this information.

What number of refugees and asylum seekers that sought help from Croydon Council between January 2018 and December 2019.

Croydon Council does not hold this information

Does the Council have any initiatives solely dedicated to aid and help integrate refugee and asylum seeking communities in Croydon?

Croydon Council does not have any initiatives solely dedicated to aid and help integrate refugee and asylum seeking communities in Croydon. Croydon Council complies with its statutory duties by providing support services to vulnerable adults with care and support needs under the Care Act 2014; to care leavers under the Leaving Care Act 2000; and to vulnerable children with families and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under Children Act 1989.

Please provide any up to date statistics on the numbers of adult asylum seekers and refugees settled/living in the Borough of Croydon? (by this I mean those who secured status in the last 2-3 years).

Croydon Council does not hold this information.

If you are dissatisfied with the way the Council has handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act you may ask for an internal review. This should be submitted to us within 40 working days of this response. You can do this by outlining the details of your complaint by:

Email: FOI@croydon.gov.uk

Writing: Information Team
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
7th Floor - Zone C
8 Mint Walk
Croydon CR0 1EA

Any requests received after the 40 working day time limit will be considered only at the discretion of the council.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Croydon Council

SENT BY EMAIL

Contact: Information Team
FOI@croydon.gov.uk
Our Ref: 1320492
Date: 30 January 2020

Dear Miss Raza

Freedom of Information Request

Your request has been considered under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to you. Specifically, you have requested the following information:

'Has Croydon Council funded any integration projects for child refugee and asylum seekers in the last 5 years?'

Yes, the Controlling Migration Fund (CMF) aims to promote community cohesion and integration of young asylum seekers and refugees in the borough. We applied twice successfully in 2017 and 2018.

'Please provide any up to date statistics (2018-2019 estimates) on the numbers of child asylum seekers and refugees in the Borough of Croydon?'

For financial year Apr 2018 to Mar 2019

Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19
305	299	282	276	274	281	278	290	286	271	275	275

Performance team has most up-to date figures (beyond financial if needed). This is only for UASC under the care of Croydon not for those under the care of other LAs living in Croydon.

'Is there a department/person at the Council that oversees child refugees and asylum seekers?'

Social work with Children Looked after Care Leavers (UASC)
Virtual school has a dedicated lead for UASC
CMF project manager involved in projects supporting UASC across

'Were there any projects to support unaccompanied minors between January 2018 and December 2019?'

Through the CMF:

- Summermix 2019: summer school for young asylum seekers and refugees
- Croydon Town College:
 - o Interim education provision for young asylum seekers and refugees aged 16-19 awaiting a college place

- Peripatetic teacher to support transition of Y11 young asylum seekers from interim provision to mainstream schools
- Foster Carer champions training scheme:
 - UASC specialist training package developed by Croydon foster carer champions and IOM.
 - Training on Caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and young people delivered by the champions to other Croydon carers
- UASC Knowledge Hub: development of a specialist UASC digital hub/centre of excellence supporting social workers/local authorities with little or no experience of caring for young asylum seekers and refugees
- Improving timeliness and developing good practice in age assessments processing
- Recruitment of a youth transition and welfare officer. The role focuses on supporting young asylum seekers negatively impacted by delays in asylum and immigration processes and by complex transitions.

Virtual school:

- Croydon Town School: this is not a project (as in limited in time). It is part of the offer for any young asylum seekers year 11 who are awaiting for a school place (interim education provision)

The two below are the same project: IOM and Barnardo's jointly delivered a training programme to foster carers on trafficking of Vietnamese and Albanian children in care.

IOM – International Organisation Migration
Barnardo's – (Trafficked Asylum Seeking Children)

If you are dissatisfied with the way the Council has handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act you may ask for an internal review. This should be submitted to us within 40 working days of this response. You can do this by outlining the details of your complaint by:

Email: FOI@croydon.gov.uk

Writing: Information Team
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
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8 Mint Walk
Croydon CR0 1EA

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Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Croydon Council

QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. What was the reason for leaving your country?**
- 2. What happened when you arrived in the UK?**
- 3. Have you sought help or advice in the UK since you arrived?**
- 4. Where did you seek help and advice?**

PLEASE TICK ALL THOSE THAT APPLY

- Support from friends and relatives
- Counselling (one to one/group)
- Information
- Drop-ins
- Help from other people suffering with similar problems?
- Help from refugee and asylum support agencies
- Support groups
- Local doctor
- Befriending
- Helped by a support worker
- Meditation/alternative therapies
- English classes
- Activities
- Training
- Volunteering
- Other (please give details)

- 5. Which of these services did you find useful?**
- 6. Which was less helpful?**
- 7. Have you found it difficult to access services in your area?**
- 8. How could services be improved for refugee and asylum seekers in Croydon?**
- 9. What has been your experience since you arrived in the UK, have you felt welcome?**
- 10. Would you like to add anything else/comments?**

SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION QUESTIONNAIRE
CROYDON NEW COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEE FORUM

All respondents could opt to make this information confidential and were not required to share it.

1. How old are you?

- 18 – 24 25 – 34 35 – 44 45 – 54 55 – 64
 over 65

2. Your nationality?

3. What is your legal status within the UK?

4. What is your gender?

- Male Female Transgender Prefer to self-describe _____

5. What is your marital status?

- Married
 Divorced
 Widow/widower
 With Partner
 Single
 Separated by choice
 Enforced separation/separated by circumstance

6. Please state location of where you live? Postcode (first three letter and numbers only e.g.)

7. What was your employment status 3 months prior to leaving your home country?

8. Which sector were you employed in?

9. What is your current level of education?

10. How long have you been here:.....

**"Do not judge
us, we are just
struggling,
everyone
needs help
sometimes"**

Lena, 34, mother of 3



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