

Bristol Asylum Seekers and Refugees Needs Assessment and Current Activities 2017

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Refugee and Asylum seekers Needs Assessment

1 Numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol

Asylum seekers

The UK is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which defines a refugee, and guarantees fair treatment.

The world has seen unprecedented numbers of people forced into refugee situations in the past few years. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees has counted over 60 million people forced out of their homes for the first time. Over half of these are children. All 145 signatory countries have been asked to ensure that people in need can reach sanctuary, either by making asylum claims ('spontaneous arrivals') or via 'resettlement schemes'.

'Spontaneous arrivals'

People in need of sanctuary have the right to apply for asylum in the UK. In 2016, 38,517 people applied, including dependents – a fall on 2015 figures. In terms of the number of asylum seekers per 1000 population, the Europe average in 2016 was about 2.4. The corresponding figure for the UK was 0.6. Nationally, 90% of asylum seekers came from Asian or African countries in 2016. The top five nationalities for UK asylum applications were Iranian, Pakistani, Iraqi, Afghan and Bangladeshi. The highest number of asylum grants (before any appeal) were awarded to Syrians, followed by Iranians, Eritreans, Sudanese and Afghans.

Those who do claim asylum in the UK are barred from claiming any welfare benefits, from applying for or receiving Social Housing or Housing Benefit, from working, or renting privately. The only legal form of income is a Home Office allowance of £35 pw pp. Accommodation is a room in shared housing, allocated on a 'no choice' basis by the Home Office. The private contract for provision of accommodation to asylum seekers in Bristol (and the rest of the South West) is with Ready Homes. Therefore the Home Office have responsibility for asylum seekers not the local authority (* except for a minority of asylum seekers who have additional needs see page 2)

Ready Homes can provide up to 500 bed spaces in Bristol, although at May 2017 the number was 340.

This exclusion from mainstream services and from working lasts until a positive decision is made on the asylum claim, which can take anything from a few months to many years.

For further information on Asylum seeker data see [here](#)

In addition to the asylum seeker families housed through Ready Homes,:

- Approximately 80 individuals and families receive support from the local authority. This includes people who are destitute failed asylum seekers and also those who have No Recourse to Public Funds who are fleeing safe countries but who have humanitarian needs (e.g. fleeing FGM) and who are making an application to the Home Office on Human Rights grounds. Support from the local authority is given only to those who have needs under the relevant sections of the Children Act 1989 and/or Children Act 1989. Support is co-ordinated from Bristol City Council's Asylum Team *

What percentage of asylum seekers are awarded status?

In 2016, there were around 39,000 applications for asylum in the UK, this number includes dependent family members of the main applicant and 21,000 people were turned down by the Home Office at the initial stage of the asylum process.

What is refugee status?

Refugee status is awarded to someone the Home Office recognises as a refugee as described in the Refugee Convention. A person given refugee status is normally granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years, and at the end of that period can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. Other status include Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave

What changes when a person is awarded status?

If a person has claimed asylum and been given refugee status, Asylum Support stops 28 days after the decision. This means the refugee stops getting their cash allowance and has to move house(if they have been given asylum seeker accommodation). Once a person has refugee status, he or she has permission to work in the UK - in any profession and at any skill level. The person has to open a bank account and get a National Insurance number.

This is a vulnerable time for refugees as there most do not have savings to be able to wait for a new welfare benefit claim and most do not have savings to fund a deposit for new accommodation.

How many people are 'new' refugees in Bristol?

The Bristol Red Cross move-on service works with refugees for one year after they receive status. In any one year, there are at least 259 people eligible for a 'within one year of status' service. In the calendar year 2016 the Bristol Red Cross worked with 113 'new' refugees and an additional 146 refugees who had started with the move on service in the previous calendar year but were still within their one year of receiving status.

Refused Asylum Seekers without Support

Bristol Hospitality Network support 30 destitute failed asylum seekers by providing supported lodgings in homes throughout Bristol. BHN estimate a further 100 refused asylum seekers without support are in Bristol. Many may be destitute, homeless or vulnerably

housed for many months or years whilst waiting for their claim to be reconsidered so they are a significant but often hidden part of the asylum seeker population in Bristol.

Refugees and Asylum seekers receiving support in Bristol

Refugees may of course have additional support needs for longer than 12 months after receiving their status, so the number of 'refugees' in Bristol is higher than just 'new' refugees. The different welcome centres record the number of refugees and asylum seekers who access their services but people may attend more than one welcome centre so the numbers quoted below are not all different people.

- October 2015 to September 2016, Bristol Refugee Rights welcomed at least 850 different members. From March 2016-March 2017 BRR welcome 391 new members. BRR March 2016 Asylum Status Review: 27% of members were asylum seekers without financial support.
- October 2015 to September 2016, Borderlands welcomed at least 469 different people from over 48 countries; 255 of these for the first time. Borderlands estimate that about 40% of its members are asylum seekers.
- Refugee Women of Bristol support around 300 women who are asylum seekers, trafficked women, refugees, spouses of refugees and women granted refugee status in EU countries. 22% of Refugee Women of Bristol's members are asylum seekers and it continues to increase

Resettlement schemes

Resettlement schemes are partnerships between UNHCR and national governments, whereby nations welcome fixed numbers of people already designated as Refugees by UNHCR, usually from refugee camps where living conditions place their lives at risk. Bristol has acted strongly to participate in schemes designed to provide safety to those refugees deemed most at risk in the current crisis.

The Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPR scheme)

The SVPRS is central government funded, with funding including provision for housing, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), education and integration support. Families on the VPR scheme have Humanitarian Leave to stay in Britain for five years and from July 2017, families on the scheme have refugee status.

The MENA Vulnerable Children's Scheme (RVC)

The Resettlement of Vulnerable Children scheme is central Government funded with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to resettle children and adults from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The scheme supports vulnerable and refugee children at risk and their families. Similarly families have 5 years leave to stay in the UK

Bristol City Council has an ambitious target to resettle 25 families or 100 people each year for the duration of the programme (until 2020), but the target is dependent on identifying appropriate and affordable accommodation. Support is managed in-house by the Equality and Community Cohesion Team but from 2018 the service will be commissioned externally.

By the end of August 2017, 101 people have been resettled which includes two RVC families and 18 VPR families. The scheme offers private landlords a housing management service at no cost for the landlord in return for a property with an affordable rent. Every suitable property offered to the scheme results in a new family being invited to Bristol under either scheme. The growth of the scheme has been limited by lack of supply of affordable properties.

What is the difference between resettlement schemes and 'spontaneous arrivals'?

Unlike spontaneous arrivals, people arriving under the schemes immediately have the right to claim welfare benefits, to freedom of movement and to work.

Therefore people from comparable situations receive different rights and support, for example two families from Syria may have fled at the same time. One found their way to a refugee camp, and from there, via the SVPRS, to Bristol, where they are recognised as refugees and can work, study and receive funded integration support.

The other family found their way to the UK themselves, claimed asylum and were dispersed to Bristol. They are prohibited from working, have no integration funding attached, and need to wait for a decision on their asylum claim. If they have children not yet in the UK, they will have to wait until a decision is made on their claim before they can be reunited.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People

This describes asylum seekers below the age of 18, who arrive in the EU / UK unaccompanied by a responsible adult, or who are left unaccompanied after their arrival. Legally, UASC are treated in the same way as UK born looked after children.

'Dubs' Children

The Government has made a commitment to accommodate unaccompanied asylum seeking children who sought sanctuary in Europe or who are in northern European camps trying to reach the UK before March 2016, known as 'Dubs' children. BCC has accommodated children under this scheme and intends to continue doing so if national numbers require.

'Dublin III' children

Some UASC in Europe have family resident in the UK, and so have a right to have their asylum claims considered in the UK, under the Dublin III Convention. They are treated as children who have a family in the UK and therefore do not have looked after status and the same rights as UASC children.

Spontaneous arrivals

There are also children who arrive spontaneously and claim asylum alone. Many may not know that the a particular age significantly changes their rights and responsibilities. BCC Social Services have a duty to make age assessments for young people referred to them whose age is unknown or disputed, and to provide care and ensure legal advice if they are found to be children. Children arriving via Dover and claiming asylum in Kent or London may be moved to other areas of the UK under the Government's Transfer Scheme

Bristol City Council is currently supporting 65 unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, 45 of whom are under 18 and 20 are care leavers. Within these, two have come to Bristol via the Transfer Scheme and three under the Dubs agreement. Seven asylum seeking young people have come to Bristol to join family under the Dublin agreement and have been supported by children's services.

Key Issues for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Bristol

2 Housing

Housing is a key issue for refugees and asylum seekers, and when consulting with asylum seekers housing was joint top priority alongside legal support, for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people it is the third most important priority and for support organisations it was fourth most important priority.

The main issue was lack of accommodation and homelessness, but concerns also included poor quality accommodation, overcrowding, lack of affordability and transport/proximity to local services. Asylum seekers highlight that safe housing is a priority with many feeling unsafe in their accommodation and they feel little seems to be done by authorities to protect them. Refugees highlighted they would like more support to understand how to apply for social housing and what are the processes used to apply and be assessed for social housing with either the council or registered social landlords in Bristol.

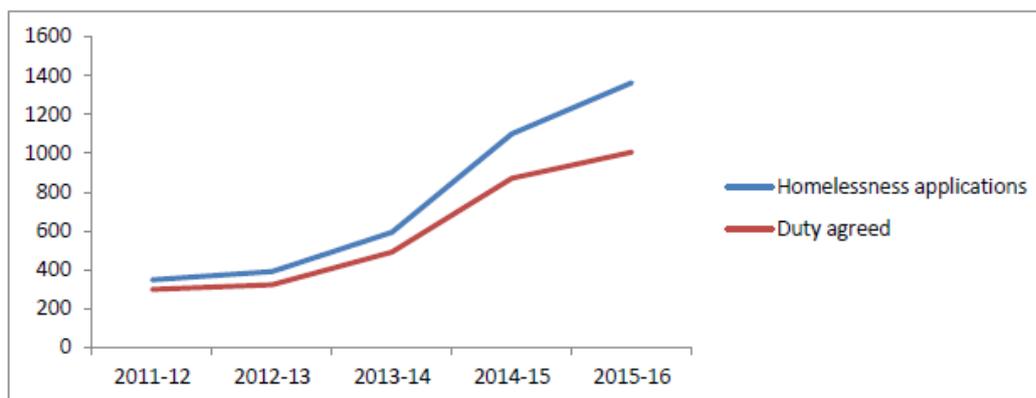
When an asylum seeker is granted refugee status, those who are receiving accommodation and subsistence payments from the Home Office are informed that it will cease in 28 days. This is central Government policy. This is known as the 'grace' or 'move on' period and it is expected that the newly recognised refugee will be able to secure housing and income in this timeframe. As described above, approximately 120 people in a 12 month period will need to find accommodation within this 28 day timeframe In Bristol. In reality the 28 days may indeed be less as refugees need to wait until they have a letter to notify them of status before they can begin to apply for benefits and new housing.

There are considerable housing pressures on Bristol with a significant number of people at any one time presenting as homeless and a limited supply of affordable accommodation. The high levels of rent in Bristol mean it is much harder for people on low incomes to access the private rental market.

Newly recognised refugees are just one of many groups at risk of homelessness and thresholds for services are high. When compared with other groups who are vulnerable to homelessness who have high and complex needs such as significant and enduring mental health conditions, substance misuse issues, rough sleeping and those at risk of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and sexual violence; newly recognised refugees on the whole have lower needs when compared with the types of complex needs experienced by other homeless people. New refugees do indeed have needs relating to trauma, poverty, isolation and other needs specific to refugees which are not experienced by the settled population.

As competition for accommodation increases and demand outstrips supply, the degree of prioritisation for different needs is important. Below is a table from the [Needs Assessment for single homeless adults 2016](#) showing increasing pressures on homelessness services. The changes to asylum support in the Immigration Act 2016 could increase the number of homeless asylum seekers in Bristol.

The amount of homelessness applications received by the council has increased significantly over the past three years, the majority of which the council has a duty to provide for.



There were 8849 households on the Home Choice Bristol waiting list on 22-06-2016.

What is being done to address Housing Needs?

Ashley Community Housing provide 130 rooms for newly recognised refugees in Bristol, there are 100 people on the waiting list. ACH is a registered housing association which identify properties, apply for exempt status, purchase the properties and then let them to refugees. They provide wrap around support, training, employment pathways and ESOL and aim to move on tenants within 12 months due to the need to free up accommodation for newly recognised refugees. Provision is mainly for single refugees rather than families due to nature of the current housing stock. They have a significant waiting list.

Bristol City Council has agreed to lease three properties to ACH so that they can be used for move on accommodation as part of their refugee resettlement programme. All three properties required extensive repair and refurbishment and the cost of this was funded by ACH. In return, the Council agreed to grant leases for 10 years at peppercorn rents in order that ACH could fund the repair work. These three properties are part of an ongoing

programme where the council has been looking at various options to bring empty flats and houses back into use. The three properties are now fully renovated and will be used to house 5 tenants and enable the resettlement of 40 refugees over the next ten years. ACH are keen to work with other partners in the same way, to minimise empty houses in the City and help house the refugees on their waiting list.

Refugee Welcome Homes provide accommodation for single male refugees who are under 35 who are applicable for Housing Benefit, there are currently have 8 bedspaces. The organisation is run by volunteers. Refugee Welcome Homes are working to attract social entrepreneur funding to buy houses to be offered to at affordable rent levels for working refugees (not exempt rents).

Green Pastures is a social investment company working with 50 partners nationally to provide accommodation and support for over 780 people. Green Pastures is approaching local authorities in the South West to provide accommodation for refugees but there are no specific plans for Bristol at present. Other local social entrepreneurs and community interest companies are considering purchasing accommodation to let to refugees.

Community and Faith organisations which own properties could be persuaded to let accommodation to refugees, most are charities and have to earn a 'market rent' from any property in line with charity regulations therefore accommodation for asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds is limited.

The Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme supports refugees and approaches private landlords offering a housing management service to encourage landlords to offer quality housing at Local Housing Allowance rates

Bristol Hospitality Network support predominantly refused asylum seekers. They offer accommodation for free on a full board basis and a Solidarity Fund of £10 a week for most vulnerable members. This is offered by volunteers who donate a room from their home. They also offer volunteering opportunities and involvement in a catering business and run a drop in centre on a Monday at Easton Christian Family Centre and which is open to all, offering a hot lunch and support from an advocacy team for destitute asylum seekers. BHN can't support families as infrastructure does not allow supported lodgings to host children.

Bristol City Council has obtained funding from the Controlling Migration Fund for two years to identify and target rogue landlords in the city who exploit migrants, and to take legal enforcement action. To undertake this work the council is recruiting 1.5FTE additional officers to provide support and prevent unlawful eviction and to take a range of legal action and an Environmental Health caseworker to undertake targeted inspections of known rogue landlords' properties.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are entitled to accommodation up to the age of 18 (and thereafter if status is granted). Some young people will need a foster placement and

some young people aged 16 and over will use supported lodgings (co-ordinated by Reconstruct) or supported accommodation provided by a number of youth-specific contractors. Supported accommodation placements are based on the need of the child and not their status so these bedspaces can be used by UASC and care leavers with status. Young people are particularly challenged by the high costs of rents because age affects wage levels for example the National Living Wage affects people aged 25 and over and the National Minimum Wage is affected by age, see below.

Year	25 and over	21 to 24	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice
April 2017	£7.50	£7.05	£5.60	£4.05	£3.50

3 Employment

Social Integration

Finding employment is key to the social integration of refugees and is identified by support organisations as the second most important issue for refugees. Consultation with asylum seekers highlighted how the legal restrictions which prevent them from working and from some volunteering, is harmful to their health because they are unable to have a meaningful activity to structure the day/week to give them purpose or enable them to provide for themselves. They also feel de-skilled through under usage of their occupational skills.

The UK has a high productivity, highly accredited workforce. Many jobs require a minimum of GCSE English or Maths or require evidence of technical qualifications. Refugees may have qualifications but these may not be recognised in the UK or they do not have paperwork to evidence their qualifications, or they do not have the technical English to pass health and safety tests, or the Driving Theory test.

Age, education and skills as well as motivation and work ethics are key to the labour market integration of all migrant groups, including refugees....A lack of (English) language skills, a low educational background or a lack of transferable job qualifications are barriers explaining a slow labour market integration of all categories of migrants. Refugee-specific obstacles are legal restrictions to access the labour market, a long duration of the asylum procedure and a temporary, insecure residence status. These barriers prevent refugees from quickly and fully participating in the labour market. Beyond these barriers, factors like less developed social networks, housing regulations, health conditions like trauma and violence during flight have strong links with the labour market outcomes of refugees. Additionally, cultural barriers are aggravating factors, and are likely to be greater for the recent refugees than earlier migration groups

[Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices
IP/A/EMPL/2016-08 PE 578.956 March 2016 EN](#)

Child poverty

Employment is a key factor in alleviating child poverty. Migrant and refugee children are overrepresented among children living in poverty in the UK.

The causes of child poverty in poor migrant families are often the same as in the larger population, as are the solutions. These include enabling parents to move into and stay in work, affordable childcare, ensuring that benefit levels do not punish children and supporting low-income families in work. But migrant families also face some specific issues. Many are starting again, without the accumulated possessions of others. Support networks that enable other low-income families to cope can be severed by migration. Language barriers can impact on migrants' employment prospects and lead to a lower uptake of benefits. Remittance payments and support for destitute irregular migrants also impact on family welfare.

[IPPR – Shared Ground 2014](#)

Commonalities between refugees and migrants

There are strong correlations between support the refugees need to enter the labour market and the support economic migrants need to enter the labour market. The Census 2011 highlighted that people not born in the UK are 16% of the population in Bristol and 9% of Bristolians not born in the UK are relatively new arrivals, so devising a policy response which meets the needs of economic migrants and refugees could have a positive impact on a significant proportion of the local population.

Figure 14: Length of residence in the UK

Source: ONS © Crown Copyright 2013. ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis]

	Bristol	%	E&W%
Born in the UK	365,108	85.3	86.6
Resident in UK: Less than 2 years	9,610	2.2	1.7
Resident in UK: 2 years or more but less than 5 years	12,256	2.9	2.1
Resident in UK: 5 years or more but less than 10 years	16,262	3.8	2.8
Resident in UK: 10 years or more	24,998	5.8	6.8
Total population	428,234	100.0	100.0

Both groups need an early offer of language tuition and skills assessment. Both groups need quality careers counselling to develop an individualised integration plan. Both groups struggle with a lack of recognition of foreign credentials and a lack of alternative methods of assessing informal learning and work experiences. Both would benefit from job search assistance and quality mentoring.

However there are also important differences.

- Economic migrants have chosen to come to the UK, but refugees have enforced migration.
- Both groups may have acquired employment experience and skills in a labour market at home which is very different from that in the UK but economic migrants are more likely to choose to relocate to an area which has a similar job market or where they have a local connection from home who can assist them to find work.
- Economic migrants can apply for work and have their qualifications validated, sometimes before arrival in the UK. Refugees generally arrive with weak, if any attachment or link to the host country and have gained qualifications and work experience in very different labour market conditions. Many refugees are not able to provide proper documentation that would clarify their level of education or skills.
- Refugees will establish long-term residence in their destination countries, whereas economic migrants can travel between countries for seasonal work or family needs.

[Job Seekers need specialist ESOL Support](#)

The Community Learning Team estimate generic ESOL courses can take up to three years (1000 teaching hours) to move from pre-entry level to Level 2 (reading, writing, speaking, listening). Ashley Community Housing report that refugees need Level 2 English skills to be able to move from minimum wage level work into work earning £10 an hour or more.

Refugees in work have less access to ESOL and can stagnate in entry level jobs, because they cannot progress their English skills to obtain higher level jobs which may be more commensurate with the kinds of work they were doing in their home country. There needs to be an increased availability of on-the-job training for high-skilled refugees to improve content and delivery of skills-based language learning

People with previous experience of education find it easier to learn English so language courses should differentiate in length and level of offered language courses to take into account refugees' varying educational levels

While each individual arrives with a unique set of human capital endowments and abilities, receiving country labor market structures and economic conditions influence how readily this human capital can be put to use. Human capital that can be easily transferred to the host country labor market allows for the fastest integration. But immigrants with (1) low levels of education, (2) human capital that is not in demand in host country labor market, or (3) human capital that is not transferable (because of language, credentials, or other barriers) are more likely to work in unskilled positions—or to have difficulty entering employment all together.

[MOVING UP OR STANDING STILL? -Access to Middle-Skilled Work for Newly Arrived Migrants in the European Union -Meghan Benton, Susan Fratzke, and Madeleine Sumption July 2014](#)

Specific barriers for Refugee Women seeking employment

Research published in 2015 by IPPR '[Migrant employment outcomes in European labour markets](#)' identified the low employment rates of non-EU migrants in Germany and the UK (relative to those of non-migrants) can be almost entirely accounted for by lower employment rates among women in the migrant population compared with women in the non-migrant population. In the main, dual income households live above poverty levels, but single income households with entry level jobs are more likely to need tax credits to lift their above poverty levels. Therefore supporting employment for women migrants is important is enabling families to support themselves and to achieve better outcomes for children.

Many refugee women are actively looking for employment but have experienced barriers that are a consequence of being a refugee, such as trauma and stress and health problems and need more support in terms of language and access to specific skills. Refugee Women of Bristol (RWOB) report that in the cultures and the norms that many refugee women grow up in, it is uncommon to be in the labour market, therefore it takes a long time for them to gain the confidence, skills and language they need to secure employment. Furthermore, most of the RWOB members are single parents and find it difficult to access affordable childcare.

The importance of Accessible Generic Provision

In Bristol employment and skills providers are developing generic pathways to meet the needs of diverse citizens who experience additional barriers to the labour market. It is important that generic provision is accessible and relevant for refugees. Initial assessment's follow an ABCD model and employment navigators work with individuals to produce a personal pathway plan

- **Assets** – What I'm good at
- **Barriers** – What's stopping me
- **Commitment** – What's needed to get and keep a job
- **Development** – What more I need to get and keep a job

It is important that the generic provision recognises the main barriers to employment for refugees:

- Lack of English which causes an immediate barrier to finding work, a barrier to finding work in a specific field due to lack of technical English and longer term causes a barrier to progression.
- Lack of tailored English language support provided by competency level or available to people who already in work and who want to progress their English
- Imperfect information about and access to a range of services, entitlements, and support, for example access to housing when given status and needing to move

from NASS (asylum seeker) accommodation, family reunion, transferability of qualifications, access to higher education funding, employment rights.

- There can be lack of self-belief and/or motivation to take action and invest in skills development which would increase their employability and which could then lead to higher earnings
- The higher incidence of barriers which can diminish employability, such as: lack of adequate housing supply; health inequalities, including higher levels of long term illness and disability; lower educational attainment and qualifications, including lower levels of literacy, numeracy and IT skills.
- Employer practices and behaviour which do not sufficiently encourage staff training and development and/or where individuals are in employment which is less likely to benefit from progression support, such as zero hours contracts, temporary contracts, and self-employment.
- Employer lack of confidence to 'take a risk' on an employee who has no previous employment history in the UK, may require a longer induction than other employees

The impact of the Flexible Job Market

In 2015, as part of a research project conducted with Bristol Refugee Rights and the University of Bristol, a group of members were interviewed. They had been granted leave to remain for varying lengths of time within the previous 7 years:

- Only about 50% had ever had any employment.
- Only 12% currently had regular (part time) hours.
- 30% had zero hour contracts.
- 60% had experienced homelessness in the UK
- 11% were homeless when interviewed.

The changing nature of the UK labour market has led to increased insecure employment and self-employment.

Work with employers

Initiatives to improve employment for refugees needs to include work with employers to increase security of employment and working hours, improve access to on the job training including language provision, encourage staff progression, understanding specific issues such as cultural issues and difficulties in getting a reference from an overseas employer and provide more flexible working for parents and those with caring responsibilities.

What is being done to address Employment Needs?

The council has successfully obtained [Controlling Migration Funding](#) from the DCLG to progress a Work Zone Migrant Project which will provide a dedicated fund to support at least 70 migrants to obtain the personalised support they need into employment. This service will be targeted at people with ESOL language development needs, including both

established community members who have experienced long term unemployment (for example people from local Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities) and also more recent migrants and refugees who are either unemployed or under-employed (i.e. not utilising their full qualifications and professional work experience).

All potential service users will undergo an in-depth diagnostic assessment from a local 'Navigator' resulting in a detailed action plan and individualised support package, resourced through a personalised budget allocation to help overcome specific barriers e.g. lack of qualification evidence; lack of UK work experience to develop work related English language skills at an appropriate level; specific language 1-2-1 coaching in a specific technical area etc.

[Ashley Community Housing](#) is funded by the national Careers Service to provide employment support for refugees (in addition to other target groups). Ashley Community Housing worked with DWP to support 40 very disadvantaged people and 50% were in work within 6 months. ACH Guard to Earn course includes a work placement, Security Industry Authority door supervision training, employability skills and for successful learners, a fully funded SIA badge. For people with Entry Level 3 English skills, volunteer work placements with local organisations provide a progression route for those tenants completing employability courses and an opportunity to showcase their skills and complete key employability units such as 'Working in a Team'.

[The Society](#) is a small social enterprise offering help to refugees with finding employment, writing a CV and an application form and preparing for job interviews.

[Borderlands](#) deliver the My Futures Project aimed at refugees, especially people who have recently received 'status' in the UK and who often have very limited understanding of UK systems in which they must now participate. The programme is delivered by local expert charities, Pennywise, The Society and Ashley Community Housing to advise on Housing, Benefits & Grants for people on low incomes, Managing money and a household budget on a low income; reducing utilities costs; and avoiding debt, Opening a bank account, Employment and Supported volunteering to prepare for work

Bristol City Council has published a [Welcome to Bristol](#) pack to support refugees and migrants into work, which is published on the [Ways2Work](#) website in ten languages.

[Public Health](#) have experience of providing health improvement training and support working through social networks, for example by working with community activists to spread the no smoking message and to provide one to one support for people wanting to give up smoking. These same community dynamics could be used for employment champions and these organisations could be upskilled to support people into work. As a first step, the Welcome to Bristol translations are being promoted using posters in community languages which will be displayed in cafes and through community networks which have credibility amongst refugee and migrant communities.

The [Refugee Welcome Centre Network](#) is used by people in work and those who are out of work. Once people get their status there is a sudden need for English skills to be of a level where they can access employment, for example refugees are expected, in order to qualify for Job Seekers Allowance, to be able to work and actively looking for work. A key theme that came out of the Bristol Refugee Rights research in 2015 was the lack of knowledge refugees have of services and support available to them once they have leave to remain and so they keep returning to the Welcome Centres as an organisation they know and trust, for support and information.

3 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

To accelerate community integration, the [Casey Review](#) has recently reinforced the strong case for ESOL and support for economic inclusion, including:

- Building on classes to tackle English language deficiencies with the development of classes to tackle cultural barriers born out of segregation
- Supporting further targeted English language provision by making funding available for community based English language classes
- Reviewing whether community based and skills funded programmes are consistently reaching those who need them most, and whether they are sufficiently co-ordinated.

Key ESOL issues in Bristol

Provision for 19+ ESOL has developed in an ad hoc way across the City as a response to increasing demand and decreasing funding. Many of the providers are meeting on a regular basis as a network to share information and discuss referral routes, but there is no mechanism to review provision or to plan strategically for the needs of the City and City Region;

There is anecdotal evidence that demand for formal Skills Funding Agency ESOL delivered primarily through the City of Bristol College is higher than can be met; there are often waiting lists for the next enrolment round and they take about 20 enquiries a day.

The City Council and local VCS organisations are responding to the excessive unmet need for community based provision by providing flexible classes run by volunteers. There is a need for more customised volunteer training and resource development to improve the quality and outcomes from this provision.

There is a lack of strong progression pathways and support through ESOL levels and into work. Much of the provision is unaccredited, and so the curriculum is not prescribed and is left to individual tutors to develop. As learners move from one setting to another they are often repeating work or have skills gaps that are not addressed and they are not progressing quickly. This also means that learners may not be getting the technical language they need for particular career pathways or the skills they need to enter the local job market.

ESOL learner destinations are not systematically collected, so the longer term impact on much of the provision is hard to measure and there are still limited opportunities to study ESOL alongside vocational qualifications.

There is also a shortage of IELTS courses and these have to be paid for privately – this is the International English Language Test System qualification required to prove English competence for students entering university or overseas professionals transferring to the UK.

There is also a growing demand for ESOL for social and community purposes, e.g. older people who have not acquired English skills, or parents supporting their children – whereas current funding is directly linked to getting people into employment.

There is a lack of crèche places supporting ESOL classes. Refugee Women of Bristol (RWOB), Borderlands and Bristol Refugee Rights (BRR) provide ESOL classes with crèche support. The Workers Education Association has 11 creche places and a waiting list of 25. The College and Beacon Centre have no crèche facilities, and the College has no on- site nursery provision, but can fund some childcare through the Learner Support Fund. It is also important for many learners to match class times with their children’s nursery sessions.

What is being done to address ESOL Needs?

The Bristol ESOL Network brings together ESOL providers to update information on what is being provided in which locality to which level to enable people needing ESOL to be signposted to the provision which best meet their needs in terms of locality, or child care or English levels.

Pre-16 Provision

Provision for learners under 16 years is mainly delivered through schools, nurseries and Children’s Centres, which receive an element of EAL funding in their general funding formula. Children now tend to be ‘immersed’ in mainstream classes with limited small group EAL backup. There are limited numbers of multi-lingual support staff and associated in-class support is not always available. The challenge now is to ensure all teachers and support staff really understand the needs of EAL learners, and incorporate effective strategies into their planning, but teachers report that they do not feel that this area is adequately covered in generic initial teacher training programmes.

Some schools and colleges support students to take Level 1 or 2 ESOL qualifications as a stepping stone to GCSE and to help them access post-16 provision. Others put a significant emphasis on supporting them to gain qualifications in their home language.

The admissions process has led to higher numbers of EAL learners being concentrated in particular schools (in Central and East) which places pressure on them to deliver EAL as part of an inflexible Key Stage 3/ 4 , and has led to the appointment of a specialist support

worker by the Cabot Learning Federation. Unaccompanied asylum young people are on the school roll but also are entitled to additional support from the HOPE Virtual School as children in care, and to financial support through Pupil Premium.

There is particular expertise in certain inner city Early Years settings, in some of which the majority of learners have EAL, and where the curriculum is designed to assist their English language acquisition as well as supporting the ESOL needs of their parents. Children's Centres often supplement their provision with ESOL as part of family learning programmes. An increasing number of multi-lingual staff are being employed in these settings as teaching assistants, family support workers etc. Bristol Refugee Rights and Refugee Women Bristol also have a joint early years project supporting the children of newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers in their English acquisition, and preparing them for transition into school or nursery.

[16-18 year old provision](#)

The City of Bristol College is the largest provider for 16-18 year old ESOL learners (and has 170 students, plus two under 16). This is full time provision funded by the Education Funding Agency, consisting of a two year programme with Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Functional Skills Maths, ICT and Sport the first year, with an opportunity to add in GCSEs in the second year. They have a 95% retention rate and 40% move on to take Level 1 qualifications. There has been a recent increase in the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seekers, and they now have 24. In other sixth form provision, it is sometimes possible to take ESOL Level 2 qualifications alongside A Levels or BTECs, but little specialist support is available.

[Post-19 \(adult\) provision](#)

City of Bristol College has the most extensive adult provision, and caters for 930 students at three centres (College Green, Ashley Down and Kingswood). Demand is higher than can be met, and there are often waiting lists for the next enrolment round and they take about 20 enquiries a day.

The College also contracts with community organisations to deliver Skills Funding Agency (SFA) accredited courses (59 places with Ashley Community Housing for Entry level only classes, and 277 places with the Beacon Centre (part of City Academy) for Entry 1 to Level 1 provision plus Literacy and ICT). Recently, a contract with SPAN to deliver classes to 100 people with crèche support ceased, which has caused particular issues in the Easton and Lawrence Hill area of the City .

[The Workers Education Association](#) provide SFA funded Pre-Entry to Entry 3 classes at Barton Hill Settlement and Pre- entry to Level 2 classes at St Paul's Family Learning Centre .

[The City Council's Learning Communities Team](#) currently facilitates 28 courses in community venues and schools which include 314 learners (with 158 creche places). Information,

Advice and Guidance is built into their courses and 42% progress to further learning with second step providers and 10% progress internally to employability through functional skills etc. They also commission partners to deliver where they identify gaps e.g. St Mungos at their Recovery College, New St Centre. They have conversation clubs with crèche provision in 15 venues run by volunteers as a sustainable model of provision in times of limited funding, and have ESOL work with parents embedded in some Children's Centres (like Bannerman Rd) with crèche provision.

[The Refugee Welcome Centre Network](#) have responded to the unmet need for flexible ESOL provision with childcare, or for classes fitting into school times and not requiring a regular commitment for those who have unstable housing, and have developed unaccredited classes run by volunteers, funded by trusts or donations. There is no standardised curriculum or quality assurance, but local people are increasingly relying on this provision. BRR (Bristol Refugee Rights) is the largest, catering for over 200 students last year, with classes at seven levels from Entry Level to IELTS preparation, funded by a national trust. It also fundraises to provide a creche to support the parents while in class. Bristol Hospitality Network, Refugee Women of Bristol and Borderlands also provide small non-accredited ESOL classes. RWOB has with crèche support.

Refugee and Asylum seeking Young People

There are five main groups of refugee and asylum seeking children and young people who may have additional needs

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people
- Refugee children
- Children of parents who don't have refugee status
- Early years provision
- Dublin III children and their host families

4 Unaccompanied asylum seeking young people

In the year ending March 2016, 22 UASC children started to be looked after, a rise of 32% on the previous year's total of 15. The 2016 figure is in line with this year's referrals with 25 children becoming looked after up to 5th July 2017. As of July 5, 2017 Bristol had 50 unaccompanied asylum seeking children in our care and 21 care leavers.

Currently all young people who are the responsibility of Bristol are cared for either within the Bristol area or placed as closely to Bristol as possible but remain the responsibility of Bristol under Looked After Children's requirements. The majority of all unaccompanied children and young people live in foster care: 37 (75%),;11 (21%) live in supported independent accommodation; and 2 (4 %) are living in a children's home.

Bristol has 21 care leavers aged 18-21 who were unaccompanied asylum seeking children when they came into care. The majority live in supported accommodation, however 7

(33%), continue to live with their former foster carer and (4=19%) live in supported independence and 2 (10%) in a children's home.

The largest group are children from Afghanistan (28= 60%), with smaller numbers from Eritrea, Albania, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria and Somalia. Similar to the national picture, the majority are male (40 = 93%) and aged 16 or 17 (24 = 56%).

Bristol has cared for and supported unaccompanied children arriving in the city and seeking asylum since the early 1990s when children and young people travelled to the UK escaping conflict in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia. Since that time, children and young people have presented in the city with increasing frequency and from a variety of countries of origin escaping conflicts in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa.

There are three groups of unaccompanied children who arrive in the city:

- Spontaneous arrivals are those who first present once they have arrived in Bristol
- Those accepted through the National Transfer Scheme which is administered by South West Councils coordinate the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership of Local Authorities in the region. This is the mechanism by which children and young people, who have arrived in Kent or other areas where there is a higher than average ratio¹ of unaccompanied children to total child population, are relocated across councils in England. Local Authorities work on a voluntary and in this region, rota'd, basis to accept children through the national scheme.
- Those accepted from Europe and the camps in Northern France or elsewhere (often referred to as 'Dubs' children).

Upon arrival in Bristol or the UK, for those coming from European Camps or through the National Dispersal Scheme, an initial interview and age assessment is undertaken to determine the child or young person's age. Those reporting and initially assessed as under 18 become looked after children under Section 20 of Children Act 1989 and a placement found that is best able to meet their needs. The child or young person will then receive all the support and services provided to children in our care whilst the full age assessment is completed. This is generally a time of uncertainty for young people as most are aged 15-17, have poor English and little understanding of the looked after children's system in the UK. Use is made of translation services to help us, the young person and carers or others understand what's happening and what's needed.

In addition to the looked after children system, unaccompanied young people are required to negotiate the Immigration system. If they are under 17.5 years, they will be given

¹ No region is expected to have in excess of 0.07% in relation to their current total child population with each region expected to increase their numbers to this threshold where appropriate. The ratio does not include children leaving care or out of area placements, with the plan that the transfer scheme will be used to enable out of area placements to be transferred to the host authorities where this is mutually agreed.

discretionary leave to remain if their asylum case is unsuccessful and the Home Office accept there are insufficient reception arrangements in their home country for them to be returned. Alternatively if their asylum claim is successful, they will be granted 5 years refugee status. If they are granted leave to remain until they are 17.5, they will then need to make a further application to remain in the UK before their 18th birthday.

At age 18, unaccompanied children who have leave to remain or who are appealing against the end of their leave to remain will become Former Relevant Care Leavers provided with the full range of support and services available to all care leavers. Pathway Planning with such young people is complex as it must incorporate plans to stay in the UK alongside the possibility of departure from the UK and must include support for legal and Home Office requirements alongside the support required for the young person to develop the skills for a successful adulthood.

For those whose appeal rights have ended however, the Immigration Act 2016 removed all rights under the Children Act. The expectation is that these young people will be returned to their country of origin and that support and services revert to the Home Office support that would be available to any other adult asylum seeker. There is a risk that as a refused asylum seeker, they won't get any support from the Home Office unless they agree to making a voluntary departure which means they could find themselves homeless at age 18.

Health

Children and young people often require additional health care with young people having both physical and mental health needs relating to their experiences and journey to the UK.

Their experience suggests that for the first few weeks after arrival young people appear to cope well, sometimes showing signs of relief that their journey is over. However, leaving family, friends and country and travelling to the UK is often traumatic and on arrival the immigration process is complex, challenging and anti-therapeutic. After a number of months they often hear that some of these young men are having trouble sleeping, are irritable and short tempered, with formal assessment finding that they are showing signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Whilst there is no dedicated health service for unaccompanied children and young people in Bristol and the treatments offered are not always adapted or appropriate to their specific requirements, when a child or young person presents at the Children Looked After Nurses (CLAN) and Thinking Allowed (a service for foster carers) are notified. The child's social workers and foster carer will then be invited to an appointment soon after the young person's arrival to begin to think about their emotional well-being and mental health and to identify things to look out for.

Additionally, the locality CAMHS' teams have developed considerable expertise, with the East Central Team in particular providing therapy to unaccompanied children and young people, support to foster carers and consultation to schools and other CAMHS teams. Their time is limited, and the absence of a dedicated health service means that some young people have to access adult specialist reception services or rely on school and foster carers.

A recent survey undertaken by Barnardo's in Bristol identified that staff and carers feel they lack the knowledge, experience or skills to feel confident in working with asylum seeking children and young people.

Education

The education of unaccompanied children and young people (UASC) who are in care is overseen by The HOPE; Bristol's Virtual School for Children in Care.

The HOPE supports Social Workers to apply for appropriate educational provision for all UASC.

- For UASC presenting with a date of birth which makes them of statutory school age (school years 7 to 11), this is an application to the closest school to the home address with a good or outstanding Ofsted judgement. The HOPE aims for all statutory school age UASC to be admitted within 20 school days of coming into care as per the Admissions Code. Bristol currently has 24 UASC of school age; of whom 23 are in school and 1 is newly arrived and awaiting a place.
- For older young people this is usually an application to the closest college offering a suitable ESOL course (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Bristol currently has 24 UASC in Years 12-14; of whom 22 are in college and 2 are newly arrived and awaiting a place.

Where The HOPE is made aware by the child's social worker or Asylum Team worker that it is thought the child may be older than the age they have given or may even be an adult, the HOPE work with social care colleagues and the education setting to ensure an appropriate course of action to safeguard all involved.

Asylum team

Children's social workers work in close liaison with the asylum team to jointly undertake age assessments with the child's social worker and advise on immigration application and appeals process. Case law requires all age assessments to be completed by two qualified social workers² and for an appropriate adult to be present. Bristol's asylum team have developed considerable expertise in undertaking age assessments and are sometimes commissioned by other local authorities. The process must be evidence based and can require an extended period particularly when the assessment finds the young person to be older than their given age are often subject to legal challenge.

² Referred to as 'Merton compliant'

Legal Support

Specialist help with immigration status was the most important issue for the unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. At present young people use legal support from local solicitors but a more rigorous pathway is needed. The University of Bristol Law Society is scoping a piece of work to develop concrete principles to

- Align the best interests of the child as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child within the legal pathway
- Research and define and improved legal pathway
- Produce guidance and training for professional Guardians
- To highlight the effects that lack of full legal status has on children

Safeguarding

In relation to age assessments, due regard must be given to safeguarding both unaccompanied and other children in foster care and at school ensuring that young adults or those who declared age may not reflect their true age are not placement and, as noted above, in school.

In 2014 the Government issued statutory guidance on unaccompanied and trafficked children outlining and enhancing local authority and other agencies' responsibilities under the Children Act to unaccompanied and trafficked children. It required local authorities to clearly record and plan measures that will safeguard and support children where trafficking is a concern.

Bristol's Community support for asylum seeking children – the offer

The media coverage of the refugee camp in Calais captured the interest of many people in Bristol who then pledged their support for children and young people coming to live in the city. The Mayor too has been explicit in his commitment to Bristol as a City Of Sanctuary, offering an initial 10 placements to unaccompanied children.

As a result of this groundswell of support from various sections of the community, including refugee and faith communities, a project group chaired by the Placement Services Manager was formed to coordinate the offer to newly arrived children and young people. The offer includes practical help such as training to staff and carers as well as gifts such as 'start up home packs' for older young people, copies of the Quran, and donations of money. At Christmas, friends of the Bristol Calais Refugee Solidarity group in Bristol and the USA raised over £1000 for the young people who had recently arrived from Calais that was gifted to young people and used in the January sales!

Increasing Placements for UASC

Bristol has developed its carer and supported accommodation provision to be better able to meet the needs of unaccompanied children and young people. Ensuring there is sufficient provision across a range of placement types remains a challenge.

The recent campaign to recruit foster carers for asylum seeking children and young people indicated that there is willingness in Bristol to care for this vulnerable group. Following a recruitment event, which was well attended, 8 potential carers are progressing with fostering or specialist lodgings assessments, and 10 are wishing to be trained as mentors. However, further care placements are needed to meet demand.

In terms of supported accommodation, whilst all supported accommodation options are available to unaccompanied young people, Bristol has recently worked with 16-25 Independent People to secure two specific houses and additional support for two friendship groups of unaccompanied young people.

Bristol's Independent Reviewing Service

All children in care are allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer. The Reviewing Service has provided the following comment for Corporate Parenting Panel:

“There is often delay at the beginning of the child’s journey in care as age assessments can take a long time. This has varying consequences for the council. Some UASC in semi-independent living are at a disadvantage as support workers do not leave the accommodation, which in turn places a lot of pressure on the Social Worker to provide everything from a trip to the GP, to medicals, purchasing clothes, bedding and general company, whereas carers can meet a number of these needs in other placement types.

There has been huge improvement in progressing applications and working with the Home Office as it is now better understood by more workers. Bristol is so lucky to have the Asylum Team and Angela Evans whose knowledge is amazing. The team is now larger which we hope will speed up the completion of age assessments.”

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People's experiences of Social Inclusion

As part of the consultation for this strategy, eleven UASC were consulted at City of Bristol College and three young people at Welcome Wednesdays youth provision. As part of the discussion at City of Bristol college we focussed on young people’s views of social inclusion and the young people highlighted high levels of social isolation.

‘When I’m in college I’m free but when I’m outside I am alone.’

One young person highlighted that he made a great effort to approach people to make friends, but others recalled being quiet because they were scared they would get things wrong and were worried about upsetting people. One person highlighted how initially he was the only Black and minority ethnic person on a national citizenship residential course

and he felt unconfident, but because the young people persisted in their efforts to communicate, at the end of the two weeks he felt genuine friendships were built. On a more personal level, some of the young people said ‘some people just give you the money and food and they don’t ask you about yourself’. The conclusion of this discussion was the young people felt ‘more should be done’ by both new arrivals and settled communities so they can “meet in the middle”. This would dispel stereotypes, “people think you are bad because they don’t understand until they know you.”

For the boys, sport was a gateway to making new friends, but none of the girls had been invited to be involved in sport. Some young people used the adult services at Bristol Refugee Rights and Red Cross highlighting the helpful people at the centre, that they ‘push you to do something’ and one young person highlighted he enjoyed the support to write poetry. All young people highlighted shopping as a place to go, wanting the shops to be open more hours as it was a place to feel part of the community.

In terms of issues, the young people highlighted similar issues to other people in Bristol – to improve the frequency, reliability and customer service on public transport, to reduce the amount of street rubbish, to improve provision for rough sleepers and highlighted that not receiving any response to an employment application was demoralising.

In terms of suggestions for improvements the young people said

“people need to know we are here... we are different but we know we are part of the community.”

The young people would like support to bring together ESOL and other students at the college. Also they suggested that there a day in Bristol to celebrate people from around the world and celebrate ‘what we bring’, to bring food from different countries or to have a concert to showcase talent from around the world. The young people would like to be supported to have more day trips to get to know the city and surrounding areas and to mix with different people.

The refugee sector does organise the annual Bristol Refugee Festival where many of these ideas are taken on board.

Monitoring progress

UASC have specific needs which are different from the settled population and foster carers need additional training to understand how best to support the young people living with them; living with a young person who doesn’t speak English, how to work with your young person to develop cross cultural understanding, understanding UK laws and values. Foster carers are familiar with understanding trauma caused by broken family attachments, but may be less familiar with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Training for foster carers, and social workers to support their development in working with this group by having a clearer understanding of the legislation, cultural issues and potential trauma that young

people have experienced has been developed. Training for social workers has been arranged during 2017 and 80 social workers will have received training by the end of 2017.

There is a need for the differentiation of outcomes for UASC from other children in care and for reporting on the numbers getting status and the numbers entitled to the after-care support that other children in care get. Monitoring progress should include numbers of successful asylum claims which have resulted in status before 18 and number of asylum seekers refused status who are removed when they become 18 years old. Some UASC disappear from the system at 18 as they fear being sent home or just get recorded as 'missing'. It is important to note that the council has little influence over status outcomes so the council will be accountable but not responsible these figures and this should be reiterated in reporting processes, but it is important to monitor these outcomes in order to lobby Government or to better understand if local legal support is as effective as possible.

Again, the numbers of UASC getting into employment and training and continuing in education, qualifications gained, and progress made should be differentiated from other children in care as their barriers in education are different and their added value scores will be different. It is also important to monitor pathways into emotional support (Thinking Allowed and CAMHS) in terms of wellbeing and mental health support.

5 Refugee children

Children of refugees have the same legal entitlements as other children and aren't distinguished as 'refugees' in equalities monitoring or school census forms. This should be changed because it is purposeful to be able to differentiate outcomes for the different groups of children.

There are social, economic and cultural factors which create specific needs for refugee communities, but these are often not sufficient to meet thresholds for specific support services, for example:

- refugee and asylum seeker communities have specific information and advice needs and language needs which are not experienced by more settled communities.
- Families and individuals may have specific cultural and religious needs, issues around inclusion and integration, and inter-generational issues which could create additional stressors and these needs may not be met by schools or other generic provision.
- Refugee communities may experience discrimination, exclusion and historical disadvantage and are more likely to live in poverty and experience long term unemployment than White British people.
- Most refugee communities are younger than the Bristol average and are proportionately more reliant on children and families' services

The recommissioning of youth services is committed youth work provision with a high level understanding of the diversity of young people's challenges across the city and how best to meet these challenges.

6 Children of parents who don't have refugee status

Some families who have been refused status are supported by the local authority under the Children Act 1989, but these children do experience significant hardship in comparison to other children.

Some children have parents who are asylum seekers or who have humanitarian status and this is not an issue when they are at school for the school, parents or children. However when the children are 18 the children become aware of their status for the first time because they are not entitled to tuition fees and cannot pursue higher education goals. There are additional risk when they reach 18 without being awarded because the 'children' can be removed. At aged 18, the 'child' within the family needs to make their own application for status which costs £900 and is often unaffordable.

Access to Education

Newly arriving children and young people who don't speak English have the same rights as any other under 18 year old in Bristol. However there are age groups where schools find it hard to accommodate the children and meet their English language needs whilst also giving specific attention to the rest of the year group. There a problem with provision for new year arrivals mid year 11, as other pupils are on a GCSE cycle and to a lesser extent arrivals in mid year 6 may receive less attention due to the importance of SATs. There are difficulties for over 16s arriving in between bi-annual intakes for ESOL at City of Bristol College as there are safeguarding risks to mix under 18s with adults in community ESOL classes. New arrivals need some form of sex and relationship education (PSHE).

7 Early Years Provision

Access to information, services and opportunities is particularly difficult for parents whose first language is not English. Specifically newly arrived parents do not understand the education system and the importance of parents playing an active role by participating in children's education, talking to teachers and forging social ties with other parents and neighbours in the local community. Newly arrived refugee and asylum seeking mothers struggle to understand how mainstream British services work, how to navigate health and social care nor how to access the support available with their parenting. This is needed at a time when their lives are often still not stable (in terms of housing, work etc.) and they are often still dealing with stress and trauma. There is also a need to provides specialist high quality support to their pre-school children, to enable them to feel safe, establish a routine, and to acquire the basic language and cultural skills to enable them to move successfully into mainstream early years settings.

Parents of early years children often need more support to feel safe to leave their children; they are often less likely to access the support of Children's Centres and Health Visitors despite being in high need of their services. Parents need flexible options for early years care which can fit in with the many other appointments and requirements involved with being an asylum seeker or refugee. Many early years children have access to little or no

toys at home, and have limited access to outside space. If English is not spoken at home (which it often is not), children are at high risk of starting school far behind their peers in terms of communication. Many asylum seeking/refugee children live or have lived chaotic lives, perhaps moving around a lot, and need support to understand and settle into routines.

8 Financial and food poverty:

Asylum support consists of basic accommodation and £36.95 per week for an individual (£5.28 per day) to meet all other needs (food, toiletries, communication, travel etc.), families would receive more. Requirements of the asylum process involve attending distant Home Office appointments, meeting with solicitors and reporting regularly (in Bristol this involves a 14 mile round trip to Patchway Police Station). Bus fares quickly use the daily £5.28 for example a First Day Rider @£4 a day, and thus attending appointments around the city involves walking long distances. If people are in receipt of Home Office support some travel to required appointments may be refundable from the Home Office.

In Bristol a collaboration between First travel company and the City of Sanctuary has resulted in a travel scheme where bus tickets can be given to vulnerable asylum seekers. City of Sanctuary raise funds each month and purchase tickets at half price from First and distribute the tickets to those most in need.

Those in local authority care have more support and are given bus passes and support with the cost of their utilities. Payments can be made to assist with school uniforms and winter clothing for children, with extra allowances for people with dietary needs

New status refugees have to leave their asylum seeker accommodation and because there is a gap between getting status and them being able to obtain a National Insurance number to access housing, benefits or employment many are made destitute and live on the streets.

Asylum seekers are not entitled to local authority housing, state benefits, or allowed to work. They have a legal right to Home Office accommodation and financial support but it is difficult to access. Our members are people under huge stress, are vulnerable, have mental and physical health problems. Some have been trafficked. All struggle with complex bureaucracy. (Bristol Refugee Rights)

Bristol Refugee Rights' Welcome Centre Asylum Status Review showed that

- 15% of members are are asylum seekers *without* support
- A further 28% are asylum seekers with support.
- 16% of members stated that the hot meal provided once a week is the only hot meal they eat.
- Many members live in survival mode with an increasing number of people being supported by our Destitution Support team for food and toiletries (a rise from 14 referrals in 2015 to 25 in 2016).

Asylum seekers who have had their claims refused often end up destitute with no support except from charities. Around 25% of Borderlands members are in this position and approximately 15% the members manage to have a hot meal only at Drop-in centres (based on Borderlands in house research data). Many members live daily in 'survival mode'.

Women asylum-Seekers have an uncertain future and will be continually aware of the fragile place in the local community. Women refugee and asylum seekers are often lone parents and struggle to feed their families. Not having enough income coupled with many children in the family means shortage of nutritious food for the family. In addition, many of them report to us that they are not able to heat their houses in the winter mornings and sometimes don't cook a hot meal for the family.

Bristol is part of a feeding Britain pilot. In terms of meeting short term needs, There is relatively good coverage of emergency food aid providers across the city (including foodbanks (or similar), and also places where the homeless can get a hot meal), so that there is almost always this option for those in need. A reliable, and sustainable, source of food donations needs to be in place for these operations. A more strategic approach to providing a reliable and sustainable source of food is required for support specifically targeted at children – this includes holiday lunch clubs and breakfast clubs. Feeding Bristol will develop projects to target particularly vulnerable groups, to reduce social exclusion as a key contributor to food poverty. For example: Initiatives to increase the inclusion of asylum seekers into our food supply system; and food provision to include minority ethnic groups (taking account of dietary needs).

Longer term action planned to support a move towards eradicating food poverty including improving education in the area of cooking healthily on a low budget; Improving accessibility to good quality food at affordable prices across all communities: and encouraging policy change to reduce poverty.

There are specific barrier to finance systems for asylum seekers

- It is difficult to open a bank account without having a financial history in the UK, without references and without evidence (a council tax bill) which proves your address
- Benefit payments require a bank account
- Any hold ups in benefit payments result in destitution and applications for the Local Crisis and Prevention Fund and ongoing dependency on the local authority
- If the Local authority funds a deposit for accommodation, this can no longer be reclaimed.
- As a positive, the Credit Union and Post office can provide accounts for benefit payments

Some asylum seekers are sent bills for their health care which can cause tremendous stress and unpaid health care bills can negatively affect an asylum claim. Most asylum seekers are entitled to emergency health care and with help from local voluntary agencies, can successfully appeal to have the bills removed. However for asylum seekers who have been refused status, then costs can be incurred for emergency treatments and for maternity care. Families can be sent bills between £3-£5,000 and are unable to pay for these costs.

9 Information, access to services and opportunities:

The Office of the Immigration Services commissioner regulates immigration advice. Advisors need to be accredited by OISC. There are three levels of accreditation

A level 1 adviser can give you advice on simple cases, for example getting a business visa extension when you have no problems with work and all necessary documents, entry clearance, leave to enter, leave to remain, nationality and citizenship and EU and EEA law.

In Bristol, the Red Cross has one Level 1 advisors and 3 trainee advisors, St Pauls Advice centre has a 0.8 FTE level 1 advisors and Bristol refugee Rights has a 0.5 FTE level 1 advisor.

Level 2 advisers can do everything that Level 1 advisers can do, but can also accept more complicated cases. You may want to use a level 2 adviser if you've had problems in the past with immigration and want permission to remain in the UK. Advisers in this category can also help: with claims for asylum and human rights applications, get your visa application decision reviewed (an 'administrative review'), if you entered the UK illegally or stayed after your visa expired and if you're being removed or deported.

There are no level 2 advisors working in the voluntary sector in Bristol

Level 3 advisers can do everything that Level 1 and 2 advisers can. They can also appear on your behalf at an immigration tribunal. In certain situations they can help you if you go to court. Avon and Bristol Law Centre have a 0.6 paralegal and an immigration solicitor and one vacancy. ABLC have a Children in Need worker to support under 18s applications but they can't support people in adulthood.

Immigration advice is becoming increasingly complex. Brexit is creating concerns there will be additional work for EEA citizens which will have an impact on what is already small amounts of service. There would be benefits in being more proactive to ensure people regularise their status to get and keep in employment, private landlords need to make checks and children of refugees should regularise their status when they are approaching 18 years old

The voluntary sector cannot meet the demand for immigration advice. People need immigration advice when newly arrived but there is an ongoing need for immigration advice to regularise status. In Bristol there are no level 2 advisors so there isn't a layer of advice which the level 1 advisors can refer into. This means the level 3 advisors are not used

effectively. Level 2 advisors need ongoing supervision, so there is an ongoing resource which is needed to sustain the accreditation of level 2 advisors.

People therefore have to pay for immigration advice and there can be a problem when people use unregulated solicitors. If they receive poor advice then they revert back to using VCS services to help them to solve their problems, but the problems have often escalated due to debts accumulated by paying for advice and possibly new problems with housing and employment which weren't present before.

Access to information, services and opportunities is particularly difficult for people whose first language is not English. Bristol Refugee Rights recorded people who speak 18 different languages attending the Welcome Centre, the vast majority also use a different script from Roman/English. Asylum seekers dispersed to Bristol and new refugees coming to the city lack geographical knowledge and cultural awareness of services they are entitled to.

Asylum seekers are among the equalities groups who are known to be disadvantaged because of their difficulty in accessing services and because of the experiences they have had prior to entering the UK

(Migrant Health Needs Assessment 2012).

Asylum seekers and new refugees need to be able to access support in their own language or through an interpreter. They need a place to go where they can make friends, build a support network that can help them to navigate the city. Advice is given at the Welcome Centres on a wide range of issues but formal immigration advice can only be given by the 0.5 FTE worker at Bristol refugee Rights. This position is not currently funded from the Bristol Impact Fund and the Welcome centres are keen for immigration advice to be included within the new Advice Services commissioning process.

Limited English language skills, poverty, discrimination, feeling unwelcome, lack of local knowledge, living in areas of deprivation and poor mental or physical health problems will all combine to prevent asylum seekers and refugees from participating in the community. Without a voice the needs and contribution of asylum seekers and refugees is easily overlooked. They feel alienated in society as they have little opportunity and support to participate in decisions that impact their lives or shape local outcomes which causes exclusion in communities.

Women refugees and asylum seekers are unfamiliar with what resources are available in the community and lack confidence to assert their rights. Not having English as a first language can make navigating health and social care difficult and participating in their children's education, talking to teachers and befriending other parents is a huge obstacle. Inability in the English language can seriously inhibit the forging of social ties to other people in the local community. In a survey conducted of RWOB members last year, 68% were unable to read maps and 46% could not locate local amenities without assistance. An inability to

follow signs, locate amenities, read maps or ask for directions can seriously inhibit life in a UK city such as Bristol.

Refugee Women of Bristol members come from 48 different countries and many different languages. Most of them can't read or write their own languages, after translating some of the languages they still rely on interpreters and a word of mouth. 25% of women attending the refugee women provided ESOL classes are aged between 45-70 who have never been in education. This group of women found it extremely difficult to even understand the process they need to go through to access help and support in Bristol. They consistently report to their teachers a lack of confidence to try and communicate to the service providers, shop keepers and neighbours and therefore wait for their family and friends to assist them. Many of our members would like to access ESOL classes and colleges but can't find accessible childcare facilities and that creates a huge obstacle to access important opportunities.

10 Health

The Haven

Since 2004, Bristol has had a special NHS Asylum and Refugee Health service known as The Haven. It was initially setup as a pilot project by the then Bristol North PCT to provide a dedicated service to meet the needs of people seeking asylum in Bristol, and is now a mainstream service, commissioned by Avon CCG and provided by Bristol Community Health. The service aims to promote access to healthcare and provide a service adjusted to better meet the needs of this vulnerable group of patients, thus reducing inequalities.

The Haven works with those claiming asylum, those refused asylum, trafficked persons, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and those who join a refugee family member. We work with all ages and with physical, mental and social problems. We are a small team of nurses, GPs and admin staff based in a community health care setting offering our patients nurse and GP clinic appointments as well as nurse contacts in community settings.

Most of the Haven's referrals come from asylum housing providers, but the service also accepts referrals from any agency. Appointments can be offered for a nurse led comprehensive health assessment to include a health screening, health promotion, update of immunisations and facilitate registration with a local GP practice. The nurse can pass any patients who need medical attention onto the Haven GPs, who have longer appointments and expertise in this field, and can refer on to specialist if needed. The Haven sends our medical records to the GP at each contact and discharge to standard GP care when appropriate to their needs.

Over the years, the Haven has developed networks and pathways with other many agencies in health and the asylum field to develop services, improve patient care, co-ordinate

patient care, and act as a hub for all health related issues with all other organisations including GP practices .

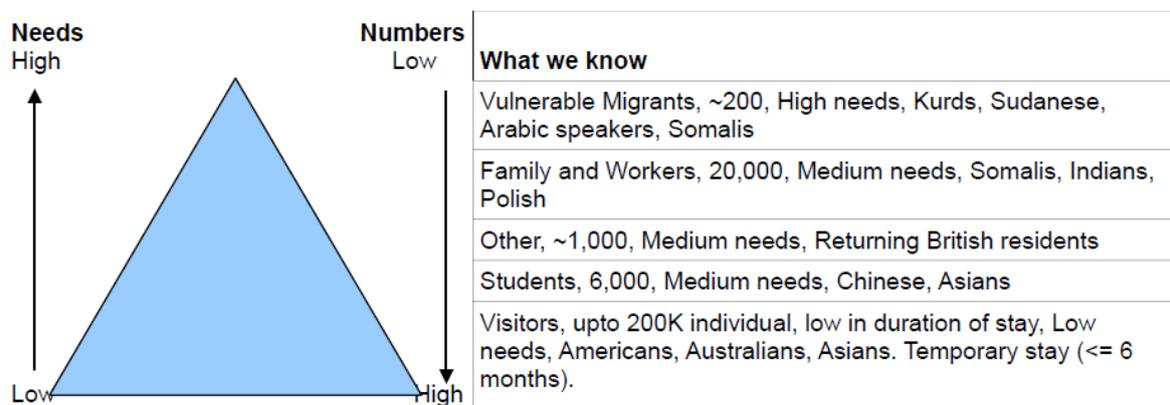
There is much confusion about entitlement to health care within health and other sectors, due to complexities in how health care is organised and complicated rules set by government. In brief, all those the Haven work with are entitled to register with a GP practice (primary care) and receive free community based NHS services. All except refused asylum seekers are entitled to free secondary (hospital) NHS services. Those who are refused can complete a course of hospital treatment started before refusal, and some hospital services are free e.g. TB services. Each hospital trust has an overseas department to check entitlement and those not entitled to free secondary NHS care are charged, a rule set by central government.

The Migrant Needs Health Assessment 2012 highlights there are general health needs experienced by all migrants:

- All migrants need to know how the NHS work
- All migrants need to be registered with a GP
- GPs need to access to appropriate information, resources and support
- Language and communication is a central issue in the provision of health care for migrants
- All migrants need to be up-to-date with the UK immunisation schedule
- Infectious disease and injury are more likely to be issues for migrants.
- Key local issues have been established as registration, language, and expectations

It is useful to conceive of the health needs of migrants as a “pyramid of need” with

vulnerable migrants at the apex (few in number, but with large health needs) spreading to those higher in number, but with fewer needs, i.e. families and working migrants, students, and visitors.



In the Bristol Community Health Assessment 2008 “Asylum seekers are among the equalities groups who are known to be disadvantaged because of their difficulty in accessing

services and because of the experiences they have had prior to entering the UK". The same comment could be made for all vulnerable migrants, which includes asylum seekers, those who have been refused asylum (failed and destitute asylum seekers), those who have been granted asylum (or other similar statuses – new refugees), and people who have been trafficked. The latter group can cross over with other categories above, but by definition includes those who have been exploited by others.

Many health issues relate to all of the conditions of migration including country of origin and circumstances there, route of transport, and subsequent marginalisation and exclusion in the UK, including exclusion from the health system on the basis of lack of knowledge, changing laws, or other institutional barriers. Health circumstances can include both physical trauma and psychological trauma as well as an array of infectious diseases.

The International Organisation for Migration published a book to assist medical staff in the treatment of trafficked persons, much of it is useful to other vulnerable migrants. They summarise health risks in a table which is reproduced here (IOM 2009):

HEALTH RISKS	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES
Physical abuse, deprivation	Physical health problems, including death, contusions, cuts, burns, broken bones
Threats, intimidation, abuse	Mental health problems including suicidal ideation and attempts, depression, anxiety, hostility, flashbacks and re-experiencing symptoms
Sexual abuse	Sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, vaginal fistula, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, poor reproductive health
Substance misuse Drugs (legal & illegal), alcohol	Overdose, drug or alcohol addiction
Social restrictions & manipulation & emotional abuse	Psychological distress, inability to access care
Economic exploitation Debt bondage, deceptive accounting	Insufficient food or liquid, climate control, poor hygiene, risk-taking to repay debts, insufficient funds to pay for care
Legal insecurity Forced illegal activities, confiscation of documents	Restriction from or hesitancy to access services resulting in deterioration of health and exacerbation of conditions
Occupational hazards Dangerous working conditions, poor training or equipment, exposure to chemical, bacterial or physical danger	Dehydration, physical injury, bacterial infections, heat or cold overexposure, cut or amputated limbs
Marginalization Structural and social barriers, including isolation, discrimination, linguistic and cultural barriers, difficult logistics, e.g.,	Unattended injuries or infections, debilitating conditions, psycho-social health problems

HEALTH RISKS	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES
transport systems, administrative procedures	

11 Social isolation and poor mental health:

Social isolation can have physically and emotionally damaging effects resulting in: depression, poor nutrition, decreased immunity, anxiety, fatigue (&) social stigma". Anxiety, poor mental health and poor wellbeing are common for asylum seekers and refugees. Migrant Health Needs Assessment 2012 stated "...this group is likely to have the highest health needs of all migrant groups. Much of this will relate to all of the conditions of migration Health circumstances can include both physical trauma and psychological trauma..."

JSNA 2015 states (pg 62)

The Refugee Council state that "Around half of all asylum seekers find themselves detained during the asylum process." It is very difficult to get refugee status recognition and can involve numerous applications. In 2015, the courts overturned Home Office decisions in 38% of asylum appeals (Home Office asylum statistics - November 2015). Hopelessness and depression can result from exposure to a complex asylum process with no discernible timeframe. |

In addition the series of events that have led to a person fleeing their country often leads to post flight trauma. Loss of family and friends and a social network in a home country can increase feelings of isolation. The loss of employment and regular and meaningful activities, policies of deterrence and restrictive measures lead to poor mental health. An academic study on mental health consequences of immigration policies of deterrence found that:

"There is growing evidence that salient post-migration stress facing asylum seekers adds to the effect of previous trauma in creating risk of ongoing post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychiatric symptoms."

(D. Silove, Z. Steel, C. Watters - JAMA 2000 – europepmc.org).

Asylum seekers and new refugees need somewhere to go that they can make friends, where they can relax, get support and learn about appropriate health and support services they can access. This is the very real value of the Welcome Centre Network in Bristol

Refugee Women of Bristol report many women have witnessed the killings of their husbands, sons, brothers, fathers and rest of their families. In addition to recovering from this trauma they are trying to stay strong for their children and don't always seek emotional support. Many elder members have long term health problems and disability which hinders their regular attendance to the centre; in addition, where they are from, counselling services are unknown and often relate to the stigma of mental illness, therefore they distance themselves.

The Haven service is keen to stress that primary services, meeting the physical and mental health issues for patients can provide holistic mental health services for asylum seekers and refugees if provided in a culturally appropriate manner. The Haven can advise on when secondary services referrals are appropriate for refugees and asylum seekers.

People from a refugee background do report that accessing counselling/therapy can be an extremely difficult process with a number of hurdles to overcome; at times asylum seekers and refugees are required to undergo an assessment involving completing a questionnaire which they find difficult. Or they may be required to undergo a course before they can access treatment and this can be difficult for someone with trauma issues. They also complain they may then be placed with a therapist with little or no experience of working with people from a refugee background suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. There are also cultural barriers to receiving support. For most refugees, counselling services are unknown and may be stigmatised as a sign of 'mental illness', therefore they distance themselves.

10 LGBT issues

At BRR, about 2% of members have identified themselves as being LGBT. Most of these have left their own country due to persecution over their sexual orientation. There are over 70 countries in the world where same sex relationships are illegal. In 13 countries being gay or bisexual is punishable by death. BRR also have members who, as a result of having lived in such hostile environments, do not identify as LGBT but who are seeking support to understand their gender identity. Although being LGBT is considered a protected status through British law many members continue to feel isolated and judged.

LGBT asylum seekers and refugees would prioritise safety and feeling safe as being a very high priority for them

LGBT asylum seekers and refugees are mostly either destitute or in receipt of Home Office support, and have no disposable income to spend on activities. Cultural barriers and limited language skills are another obstacle to participation in mainstream LGBT groups. Refugee and asylum seeker community groups and faith groups are generally not places where people feel safe to be open about being LGBT. The effects on people include severe social isolation. A gay member of BRR said that he knew nobody in Bristol for months and was spending most of his time in his bedroom. He was severely depressed and anxious, was taking medication and had become very ill. People do not access the support available. They are often unaware of their legal rights in the UK and the protections from discrimination.

Asylum seekers and new refugees need somewhere to go that they can make friends, where they can relax, get support and learn about appropriate health and support services they can access. Pride without Borders is a fortnightly support group for Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol.

12 Older People

A proportion of refugees and asylum seekers are older people. Older refugees make up some 8.5 per cent of the overall population of concern to UNHCR which reports that older people are sometimes reluctant to leave their homes and the last to flee from danger and in exile, they can become socially isolated and physically separated from their families, compounding their vulnerability.

Most older refugees in Bristol have strong local family connections or have lived in the UK for a number of years. Older refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to health and social care services. Older asylum seekers who have been refused status may have entitlements to services if they have community care needs.

13 Safety and discrimination

The asylum seeker community is aware of issues of discrimination experienced personally or by others and this adds to a fear of crime. In a consultation at Bristol Refugee Rights, asylum seekers referred to three deaths of people who used the welcome centres and were known to the asylum seeking community: Bijan Ebrahimi, Kamil Ahmad living in supported accommodation on the Wells Road and the death of Mohammed Abdurezek on Christmas Eve. The community would like the council to give more assurances that they are welcome and safe in Bristol as the murders have passed without the police or the council coming to the welcome centres to reassure the community as to their safety.

Almost all will face the extra dimension of discrimination and isolation. Refugee Women of Bristol report that women particularly, are faced with daily harassment, racism and social isolation in our city. Muslim women are particularly vulnerable in the current political climate as they can be easily identified. Many of them report fear, anxiety and daily racial harassment in the streets of Bristol. Recovering from trauma of war coupled with racial harassment can cause poor health and social isolation.

Glossary

A refugee is a person 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...' (Definition quoted from the 1951 Refugee Convention)

An asylum seeker is a person who has sought protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed. An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application for protection on the basis of the Refugee Convention or Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Many refugees have at some point been asylum seekers, that is, they have lodged an individual claim for protection and have had that claim assessed by a government or UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

A 'refused' or 'failed' asylum seeker is someone whose claim for asylum has been refused and any subsequent appeals have been unsuccessful. Unsuccessful asylum seekers are often referred to as 'appeals rights exhausted (ARE)'. The UK Government expects refused asylum seekers to leave the country. The Immigration Act 2016 is reducing support to refused asylum seekers but at present some refused asylum seekers are entitled to Section 4 support from the Home Office if there are specific reasons as to why they can't leave the country.

Local authorities may have responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or children asylum seekers who have been refused status. The local authority is responsible for providing accommodation and/or subsistence for asylum seekers who have been refused status but who have additional community care needs as defined in Section 47 of the Community Care Act 1990.

Unaccompanied children seeking asylum are children who have applied for asylum in their own right, who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or previous/legal customary primary care giver. These children and young people have the same rights as looked after young people and are entitled to support from the local authority, under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, and accommodation under section 20.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) may arrive in Bristol through being trafficked or making their own way to Bristol, or by a government agreement to support UASC who travelled to Europe before March 2016 (the Dubs agreement), to join family members (Dublin III Agreement) or through being transferred from areas with high numbers of new arrivals such as Kent or Surrey (under the Transfer Scheme).