

# The Long Term Integration of Gateway Protection Programme Refugees in Motherwell, North Lanarkshire

## Research Report

by

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

In 2005, North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) decided to participate in the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP), the UK's official refugee resettlement programme, and the Council remains the only local authority in Scotland to do so. In 2007, a total of 77 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo were resettled in Motherwell. In 2008, the University of the West of Scotland completed an evaluation for NLC of the first year of refugee settlement in the town.

### The 2008 evaluation

The report (Sim and Gow 2008) acknowledged the success of the multi-agency and inter-departmental approach taken in North Lanarkshire. Refugees had been helped into employment, although at the time many of the jobs being undertaken by refugees were temporary and some relatively poorly paid. Many refugees were working at a level below their qualifications and abilities.

In contrast to local authorities in England participating in the GPP, North Lanarkshire had allocated refugee families secure tenancies in social rented housing. As a result, families were generally satisfied with the houses they had been allocated and there was also a satisfaction with the neighbourhood, despite occasional instances of anti-social behaviour. Many refugees viewed their neighbours as friendly or helpful.

Education services were highly valued by the refugees, particularly at school level and families were pleased with – and proud of – their children's progress. As far as adult education was concerned, ESOL<sup>1</sup> classes were valued, and some refugees had chosen to attend college, so that they could receive formal certification which they could show to a future employer. It was recognised that ESOL classes would continue to be necessary for some time.

There was a general satisfaction with GP services, and refugees were happy with the treatment they had received. None of the refugees referred explicitly to trauma or to mental health problems in the interviews, although occasionally, they touched on emotional issues. Professionals were, however, becoming increasingly concerned at the emergence of trauma and mental health issues.

It appeared that the Congolese refugees were 'settling' in Motherwell and beginning to make friends with Scottish people, although the process was taking time. The process was easier for children and younger people who were attending school and perhaps also for those men who were in employment or attending college. Women who remained at home with children did not mix as much. It was generally accepted that it was perhaps rather early for refugees to feel comfortable participating in local organisations, although the important exception to this was church attendance, and churches were an important part of life for all refugee families.

Many refugees were thinking of applying for British citizenship. In the interim, they were seeking to obtain Refugee Travel Documents and some a driving licence (important in applying for jobs). The process of obtaining documentation was, however, time-consuming and potentially frustrating.

### The present study

In 2008, it became clear that there were some issues emerging which had the potential to be problematic on an ongoing basis. One was a concern about finance and there was a degree of confusion about the welfare benefits system, and about household bills (including Council Tax); many families worried as to how they might pay these.

Other ongoing information issues related to areas such as employment and education, where refugees were sometimes unsure who to ask or talk to for advice. So, while it was important that the high level of support offered during the first year was reduced, so that refugees could achieve their independence, at the same time this needed to be balanced with some level of ongoing support.

The School of Social Sciences of the University of the West of Scotland, with funding from the UWS-Oxfam Partnership and the support of NLC, decided to undertake a second study of the Congolese refugees in 2013, to talk to them about their experiences during the intervening six years, and to identify ongoing concerns. A total of 18 interviews were carried out, involving 17 households and 30 individual participants; some households declined to be involved.

<sup>1</sup> English for Speakers of Other Languages

Although most of the men are still in employment, the majority have worked in insecure, part-time jobs with periods of unemployment in between. Many refugees are not using the skills which they possess and so job satisfaction was very variable. The majority of women did not work, although many wanted to and this reflects both a lack of opportunity and a lack of childcare facilities. It may be that Motherwell is too small a town to offer a full range of employment opportunities although these may exist in the wider Lanarkshire and Greater Glasgow areas.

The insecurity of employment had an important impact on financial security and most families worried about money and paying household bills. This issue surfaced throughout the interviews.

Satisfaction with housing remained relatively high, perhaps because refugee households were housed safely and with security of tenure. But some were unhappy at living in flats, and there was significant concern about overcrowding. Since arrival in Motherwell, many families had expanded and almost all families were now living in overcrowded conditions. The local authority, however, has a shortage of larger houses to which they might move.

As previously, there was a relatively high level of satisfaction with health services. Some refugees had experienced physical health problems but, as before, we were unable to ascertain the extent of mental health problems as this was possibly too sensitive a subject for most people.

As in 2008, education was valued both at school level and in regard to further and higher education, although there were significant concerns at perceived reductions in ESOL provision. One finding from this particular survey was a widespread feeling that the refugees were being insufficiently 'stretched' intellectually. Schoolchildren sometimes believed that their teachers underestimated their capabilities, while some adults felt that they were repeatedly being advised to improve their English rather than being given more stimulating educational experiences.

In terms of local neighbourhoods, most refugees were content with where they lived, although there was widespread evidence of racism. In many cases, it took the form of verbal abuse – almost on a 'casual' basis – but in some instances, physical assaults had occurred. Some refugees felt angry and had expected to be treated with more respect while, for others, they took the view that there were 'good and bad' people everywhere. Although many families liked local areas and valued the green spaces accessible from the town, there was a discomfort with levels of drink- and drug-taking in parts of Motherwell.

For some families, racist experiences reflected the fact that Motherwell was a relatively small town with limited experience of multiculturalism. Many interviewees were able to draw comparisons with Glasgow, where there were very much larger numbers of black and minority ethnic people (12 per cent at the 2011 Census) and minorities might be thought to be less obviously visible.

Finally, although at the time of our 2008 evaluation, many refugees had anticipated applying for British citizenship, the high costs involved in this had acted as a significant deterrent. Most refugees expressed resentment at this, as they felt they had been led to believe that citizenship would be made easier than it actually was.

More detailed conclusions are contained in Chapter 7, where they are discussed in the context of the various headings or 'domains' within the Oxfam Humankind Index. We also include a list of recommendations on which we hope that organisations like North Lanarkshire Council and New College Lanarkshire, with whom the report will be shared, will be able to act.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Participating in the Gateway Programme

North Lanarkshire Council decided to participate in the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) in 2005 and remains the only Scottish local authority to do so. The formal decision was taken by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee in September 2006 in which the local authority agreed to resettle a group of about 80 adults and children from the Democratic Republic of Congo, many of whom had been living in camps in Zambia.

At an early stage in the planning process, it was decided that the refugees would be housed in Motherwell, as the town with the Council headquarters and the focus for most of the services which the refugees would use, including health, employment and transport. In addition, the town has a high proportion of social rented housing and the Council took the decision that refugees would be provided with tenancies in the social rented sector; no private rented accommodation was to be used. In contrast to GPP authorities in England, where the lead agencies in resettling refugees on the GPP were the Refugee Council or Refugee Action, in Motherwell it was the local authority which acted as the lead agency.

The refugees arrived in Motherwell in four groups between January and April 2007, travelling north on the Caledonian Sleeper. On arrival, they were taken to the Civic Centre, where they were met by the Leader of the Council, officials and interpreters, and provided with breakfast. Families were then taken to their new homes and helped to settle in.

Over the following few days, the refugee families received a number of briefings on welfare benefits, employment, community safety, health and GP services, and school and adult education services.

### A profile of the refugees

Initially, a total of 22 Congolese households (77 adults and children) were provided with accommodation in Motherwell. Eleven of these were married couples with children. There were six households with women living without a partner (five with children), and five households involving males living without a partner (in three cases a male living alone, in a fourth two brothers living together and in a fifth, two single males sharing accommodation). Finally, one household consisted of a brother and sister. Several members of different households were related.

Family structures were quite complex. Not all the children were sons and daughters of the women or couples concerned; one family group included the husband's brother, and in three cases nieces and nephews lived with the family, reflecting the fact that the fate of many parents is unknown as they failed to reach the Zambian refugee camps.

During the first year of settlement in the UK, there were seven births to Congolese families, while an eighth child was born immediately prior to arrival in Motherwell. Also during the first year, one family left Motherwell and moved to England, while the structure of two households changed over the year.

### Support for the refugees

Families were allocated social rented accommodation in different parts of Motherwell, to ensure that no 'refugee ghetto' would be created. The main support role was played by a team of existing Tenancy Support Workers, three of whom were seconded to work with the refugees. This was to allow for the build-up of strong relationships and trust.

Families were assessed in their first week in Motherwell, by Social Work staff. Together with the Tenancy Support Workers, staff helped to provide advice and assistance with a range of unfamiliar but very practical tasks, including help with shopping, cooking, cleaning, operating heating systems and with electrical appliances such as kettles and washing machines. Staff also sought to ensure that families had adequate warm clothing.

Strathclyde Police also paid visits to families to ensure the safety of the Congolese and promote their wellbeing. Police visits helped to inform refugees about community safety, and about aspects of UK law with which they would be unfamiliar (for example in relation to drugs, or to the importance of not leaving children alone in the house). Information leaflets were prepared in different languages (English, French and Swahili) and provided important contact details for the police and emergency services.

Community Learning and Development staff ran language classes and adult learning courses, for example in computing, as an aid to gaining employment. There were also 'Welcome Nights' for young people, involving both Congolese and local youths meeting and participating in a number of activities, designed to break down barriers. A music group was organised for teenagers and young adults to provide social activity and increase confidence and skills, perhaps as a stage towards joining mainstream activities.

During the initial year, each family received a quarterly review in relation to its support levels but that level of support began to tail off after the end of the first year. It was felt on all sides that refugee families needed to begin to develop their independence, receiving mainstreamed support where necessary, but on the same basis as other vulnerable groups within the area.

A key support role was played by the voluntary sector within Motherwell, particularly by the churches. The local authority met at an early stage with local religious leaders and the churches adopted the role of potential 'befrienders', chaired by a local Roman Catholic priest. Church congregations made significant efforts to collect materials for the Congolese, including clothing, bedding, toiletries and foodstuffs. The houses which were allocated to the Congolese families were fully furnished but the additional donations helped to ensure, in the words of one individual, that the refugees 'had a home and not just a house'.

The voluntary effort was so significant that refugee families required very few emergency Social Work payments, as they were provided with most of the things that they needed. The churches continued to provide support during the first year of settlement and most Congolese families are regular churchgoers. However, the level of support from the church, like that from the local authority, gradually reduced.

### **Evaluating the GPP in Motherwell**

The University of the West of Scotland conducted an evaluation of the GPP in Motherwell, a year after the refugees arrived (Sim and Gow 2008). The report found that:

- The partnership between the local authority and other agencies had been very successful in helping (mainly male) refugees into employment. Refugees received National Insurance numbers and benefit payments very quickly and all but two of those registered for work were able to find work or training courses within their first few months in Motherwell. However, some of the jobs being undertaken by refugees were temporary and relatively poorly paid and some refugees found the process of jobseeking confusing and sometimes frustrating. Most women had a domestic role and were not part of the jobseeking process.
- Refugee families were generally satisfied with the housing they had been allocated and there was also a satisfaction with the neighbourhood, despite occasional instances of anti-social behaviour. By being housed in social rented housing, all refugees had security of tenure. One possible problem in Motherwell related to potential overcrowding if refugee households continued to grow.
- Education services were highly valued by the refugees, particularly at school level and families were pleased with – and proud of – their children's progress. Families regularly attended parents' evenings to discuss how their children were getting on and were pleased at the friendships which their children were making.
- Adult language classes were also valued and some refugees attended college, so that they could receive formal ESOL<sup>2</sup> certification, which they could show to a future employer. Refugees tended to struggle to understand some aspects of the local accent.
- There was a general satisfaction with GP services. In interviews, none of the refugees referred explicitly to trauma or to mental health problems, although some professionals were concerned at the emergence of trauma and mental health issues.
- There seemed to be few instances of racial tension and no racially motivated incidents had been reported officially, although some undoubtedly occurred.

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'ESOL' stands for 'English for Speakers of Other Languages'

It appeared therefore that the Congolese refugees were 'settling' in Motherwell and some were beginning to make friends with Scottish people, although the process was taking time. The process was perhaps easier for children and younger people who were attending school and perhaps also for those men who were in employment or attending college. Women who remained at home with children did not mix as much as the men were able to. It was generally accepted that it was perhaps rather early for refugees to feel comfortable participating in local organisations, although the important exception to this was church attendance, and churches were an important part of life for all refugee families.

The Scottish Refugee Council observed that there was an apparent lack of 'a refugee voice' in Motherwell, partly due to the lack of a local refugee organisation. But the refugees did not see themselves as a 'community' or a 'group', and were quite firm in resisting any suggestion that they should form an independent Refugee Community Organisation.

In terms of ongoing issues for the future,

- There was a concern, expressed by a significant number of refugee families, about finance and a feeling that they were usually short of money. There was a degree of confusion about the welfare benefits system, which refugees found very complicated, and also about household bills (including Council Tax); many families worried as to how they might pay these. There was therefore a need for financial advice, including clear explanations of the benefits system, of the various bills with which families might be faced, and of how they might budget for these.
- Many refugees were thinking of applying for British citizenship. In the interim, they were seeking to obtain Refugee Travel Documents and driving licences (important in applying for jobs). The process of obtaining documentation was, however, both time-consuming and costly, and potentially frustrating.
- An important and ongoing issue for refugees was family reunion and this was being pursued with the support of the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre. It was likely to be a slow, stressful and emotionally difficult process.

It was obviously important that the high level of support offered during the first year of refugee settlement should be reduced, so that refugees could achieve their independence. But this needed to be balanced with some level of ongoing support and getting the balance right was clearly going to be challenging.

### Possible Future Participation in the GPP

At the time of the 2008 evaluation, the professionals involved with the Gateway Protection Programme were unanimous in describing it as a rewarding experience. There was some discussion about North Lanarkshire Council participating in the programme for a second time, with a suggestion that another location within the Council area be used, so that there was not a concentration of refugees in Motherwell. The towns of Coatbridge / Airdrie or Cumbernauld were suggested. Certainly, there was a view that North Lanarkshire should continue to publicise its experiences to other local authorities, probably through the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. By participating, the local authority had become a Scottish advocate for the Gateway Protection Programme.

During the five years since the original research was undertaken, however, the position has changed significantly. The economic downturn in the UK has led to increased unemployment and makes it much less likely that a new group of refugees would find jobs in the Lanarkshire area. The economic situation has had an impact on public finances and this in turn has led to some difficult financial settlements between local authorities and the Scottish Government. There are therefore very limited resources available to support an extension of the GPP.

Another difficulty which would require to be overcome if North Lanarkshire accepted a second group of refugees is a major change in the housing allocation system. In 2007, the local authority and the local housing associations operated distinct systems, so that it was possible for the local authority to refer refugees to associations for housing, knowing they would receive priority. Since then, a Common Housing Register has been created between all the social landlords in the area, with applicants offered housing according to levels of priority. Any future group of refugees could only be housed therefore if they were dealt with independently of the Register.

At the time of writing, it is not clear if North Lanarkshire will accept any more refugees.

## The Current Research

As the numbers of refugees living in the UK have increased, mainly as a result of successful asylum claims but also involving GPP refugees, attention has focused on their long-term integration. In 2004, the Home Office commissioned Ager and Strang to develop a framework for integration, while more recently, the Scottish Refugee Council has explored the experience of refugee integration in Scotland (Mulvey 2013). There is perhaps a general agreement that integration is made up of both processes and outcomes and that some aspects of integration – how refugees feel about their lives – may not be easily measurable. There is also a recognition by local agencies that integration requires support, and this is difficult at a time of government austerity.

Within Motherwell, it is now six years since the original research with Gateway refugees was carried out and so it appeared to be an appropriate time to meet again with the households concerned and ask them to reflect on their experiences over the last six years of living there. We were concerned about how they felt about their lives and how settled they now were in the area.

This current research is being reported primarily to North Lanarkshire Council but it is funded by the UWS-Oxfam Partnership. It will hopefully extend our understanding of refugee integration in Scotland.

## CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCHING THE GATEWAY PROTECTION PROGRAMME

### Introduction

The Gateway Protection Programme is the name given to the UK's refugee resettlement programme and is a partnership between the UK Government and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). It is an established international programme in which a number of other countries participate, including Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

Within the UK, the creation of the Gateway Protection Programme was provided for in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 and launched by the Home Office in April 2003. This has created a legal pathway for refugees identified and assessed by UNHCR as being in need of permanent resettlement and protection, to enter the UK. The number of arrivals is determined by an annual quota set each year by Ministers, having considered the resources available, the need for resettlement globally, and the impact on local services within the UK. On inception of the Programme in 2003, the quota was set at 500 per annum, although this annual target was never met; it was raised to 750 per annum in 2008. A number of local authorities expressed an initial interest in receiving refugees under the Programme but did not proceed to an agreement with the Home Office to do so (Craggs 2011). There are therefore only a relatively small number of local authorities who have accepted Gateway refugees.

Indeed, even though the UK has increased its annual GPP quota and involved more local authorities, Craggs (2011: 23) argues that:

- the extremely limited nature of the overall figures involved serves to underscore the wider allegation that there is a significant gap between the rhetoric of strategic resettlement espoused by states and UNHCR and the realities of its effects in practice.

The UK appears to lag far behind other western countries in the resettlement of refugees identified by UNHCR. In 2005, for example, Cooley and Rutter (2007) using UN statistics suggest that the United States resettled 53,800 refugees from around the world, Australia 11,700, Canada 10,400 and the UK only 175.

Tables 1 and 2 show the total number of refugees accepted under the Gateway Protection Programme from 2004 to 2012. As is clear from the tables, the numbers of refugees arriving in the UK during the first four years of the Programme fell below the 500 per annum quota set by Government, although numbers have risen subsequently. The refugees have tended to come from a relatively small number of African and Asian countries with the largest numbers coming from Iraq, DR Congo and Ethiopia. Sometimes numbers have been smaller than predicted; the Home Office had anticipated around 125 Mauritanian refugees within the Gateway Programme, for example<sup>3</sup>, but in the event, a much smaller number participated.

In terms of the local authorities involved, it is clear that, as with asylum seekers dispersed by the UK Borders Agency under Home Office dispersal policy, most refugees have been resettled away from London and south east England, a policy which may lead to separation of extended families. Of the 18 local authorities involved in the programme, eight are in the north west of England and a further three in Yorkshire and Humberside. A significant number of refugees have been housed by only three authorities (Sheffield, Bolton and Hull), although others have now come on board. Sometimes it proved organisationally difficult for authorities to participate, however. For example, the UK and the Republic of Ireland agreed a Trans-national Resettlement Project in 2009, in which Gateway refugees from the Congo would be resettled on either side of the Irish / Northern Irish border. But although 74 refugees were settled in County Monaghan in the Republic, it proved to be too difficult, politically, practically and socially to organise matters in the North and so the 46 refugees involved were instead settled in Rochdale (Robinson et al 2010).

Within the UK, North Lanarkshire Council remains the only Scottish local authority to participate.

As Collyer and de Guerre (2007) point out, the refugees have generally been settled in groups of around 60 – 80 individuals as this size of group allows for a degree of mutual support. This is in contrast with some previous refugee programmes, such as that involving Vietnamese 'boat people' in the late 1970s. Vietnamese families were dispersed across the UK in groups which were probably too small to sustain themselves with the result that many families relocated voluntarily from cities like Glasgow, which were seen as being remote, to London where a more significant Vietnamese community existed (Robinson 2003).

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.broadland.gov.uk/bdc\\_shared\\_content/bdc/committee\\_papers/Appendix\\_3\\_-\\_Gateway\\_Protection\\_Programme\\_Presentation\\_14-08-06.pdf](http://www.broadland.gov.uk/bdc_shared_content/bdc/committee_papers/Appendix_3_-_Gateway_Protection_Programme_Presentation_14-08-06.pdf)

## Evaluating the Gateway Protection Programme

There have been a number of evaluations of the experiences of refugees on the GPP and also of the views of the service providers and professionals involved.

At an overall level, the Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership commissioned Cramb and Hudek (2005) to undertake an independent evaluation of Programme delivery, based on the initial intakes of refugees. They concluded that the Programme was delivering high quality, appropriate services which were helping the most vulnerable refugees to integrate successfully into the UK. Partners in service delivery were committed and this led to high levels of satisfaction amongst the refugees themselves. Local delivery partnerships appeared to be working well and Cramb and Hudek suggested that the multi-agency approach to delivery was proving successful and could serve as a model for further resettlement initiatives.

**TABLE 1: GATEWAY REFUGEES IN THE UK: NATIONALITY**

Nationality of Resettled Refugees	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total to end 2012
Bhutanese							111		146	257
Burmese		51	77	108	63	114	47			460
Congolese (DRC)	28		134	212	141	120	100	119	184	1038
Eritrean									8	8
Ethiopian			79	90	202		32	145	349	897
Iraqi					236	542	207	75	56	1116
Liberian	118									118
Mauritanian				53						53
Palestinian						81				81
Sierra Leonean	4									4
Somali							172	93	153	418
Sudanese		20	63						89	172
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>4622</b>

Source: Home Office: Personal communication

**TABLE 2: GATEWAY REFUGEES IN THE UK: LOCATION OF SETTLEMENT**

Location of Resettlement	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total to end 2012
Bolton	81	20	40	97	91	127	128	66	278	928
Bradford					34	117	47	34	168	400
Brighton			79							79
Bromley					21	12	24			57
Bury			23	23	19	38	43	19	60	225
Colchester					30	8	20			58
Hull			62	90	67	94	56	121	116	606
Independent					20	10	9	3		42
Manchester						24	58	34	99	215
Middlesbrough					65					65
North Lanarkshire				79						79
Norfolk						11				11
Norwich			20	43	99	75	82			319
Oldham					13	31	11	11	35	101
Rochdale			52	50	54	62	42			260
Salford					54	80	29	22	45	230
Sheffield	59	51	77	81	34	131	83	72	134	732
Stockport					11	17	15	25	21	89
Tameside					30	20	22	25	29	126
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>4622</b>

Source: Home Office: Personal communication

Areas where, it was suggested, further service development was needed related to ESOL, improved access to learning and work opportunities, additional help with budgeting and benefits, and clarification of the policy and practice on family reunion.

There was a concern about the low numbers of refugees participating within the Programme, as this raised concerns about the Programme's cost effectiveness and value for money. At the time the study was carried out, however, Sheffield and Bolton were the only local authorities taking part and this would inevitably limit the capacity of the Programme.

There have now been further studies of the operation of the Gateway Programme in particular localities. These include Liberian refugees housed in Sheffield in March 2004 (Bazzie, Casey and Taylor 2007) and in Bolton later that year (Komulainen 2006), and Ethiopian refugees housed in Brighton and Hove in 2006 (Collyer and de Guerre 2007). In 2009, the Home Office published a summary evaluation (Evans and Murray 2009), which focused on Sheffield, Bolton, Hull and Rochdale. Issues which have emerged from the studies are as follows.

### Employment

Employment has been a significant issue for many refugees. In Bolton, only four out of 43 refugees were working, and in Brighton, two out of 40. None of the Congolese refugees in an interview sample from County Monaghan / Rochdale were working (Robinson et al 2010). These very high levels of refugee unemployment have led to feelings of frustration, especially over continuing low income levels. In Brighton, despite an apparent availability of low skilled work, there was considerable competition for such jobs. Collyer and de Guerre (2007) point out that refugees would be unfamiliar with the UK job market and therefore not confident about the job seeking process.

Evans and Murray (2009) reported that finding paid work was a major problem across the programme. Employment aspirations, understandably, reflected pre-UK qualifications and experiences, but most refugees were applying for almost any work which they could find. Those who found it experienced temporary, low-skill, low-paid jobs. Women found it more difficult than men to find employment and so there was considerable gender inequality in regard to the employment situation.

### Housing

Housing experiences, on the other hand, were much more varied. All refugees in Brighton, Norwich, Rochdale and County Monaghan were accommodated within the private rented sector, while in Sheffield and Bolton, a mix of local authority and private rented housing was used. Within Rochdale and County Monaghan, refugees were broadly satisfied with their housing, although concerned with some aspects of house size and condition. But in some areas, households were in housing which would be unaffordable to people on benefits or low incomes and, in Brighton, the Home Office had been forced to subsidise rental costs over and above Housing Benefit rates for two years. In Norwich, refugee families had been housed in properties leased from the private rented sector and sub-let by the local authority, but for periods of between three and five years; refugees therefore had no long-term security of tenure. In Sheffield, one refugee family had been given Notice to Quit by their landlord and had to be rehoused.

In Sheffield, Liberian refugees were mostly in social rented housing (Bazzie, Casey and Taylor 2007) but in the main, this was in low demand areas. Offers of accommodation were made after the refugees had arrived in the city and spent time in hostels or bed and breakfast accommodation and the housing available tended to be of a poorer quality. Nevertheless, refugees appeared less concerned at that time with the quality of the area and more with the accommodation, desiring to have security of tenure and to 'put down roots'. Two key issues about which the Liberian refugees complained were heating of the houses and their inadequate size, with some families experiencing overcrowding.

Indeed, North Lanarkshire Council appears to be the only local authority which decided as a matter of policy, to give refugees tenancies in the social rented housing, in both local authority and housing association property. Some houses were in blocks of flats and were in lower demand areas but other housing was much more sought after.

### Education and Skills

In all locations, the education service was highly valued. Children were seen as integrating more quickly than adults, because of the friendships which they were making at school and because of the speed with which they were learning English. Gaining English language skills was seen as particularly important, although in Bolton, there seemed to be some evidence that refugees were finding it hard to cope with a new language.

In providing an overview of various aspects of the Gateway programme, Evans and Murray (2009) note that the refugees they interviewed saw proficiency in English language as fundamental to living fully and productively in the UK. They valued access to free education very highly, not least as it was crucial to success in finding employment and for long-term integration. Access to English courses did vary and there were low participation rates in particular for married women with children. Robinson et al (2010) suggest that intensive language training of the kind which refugees in County Monaghan received were very effective and where opportunities to study were limited (as in Rochdale), this was a major source of frustration for refugees.

### **Integration and other issues**

Many of the reports suggested that, at the time they were carried out, it was perhaps too early to form a view as to how well refugee families were integrating into local communities, after only a year's settlement. However, in Bolton and Brighton, the studies suggest little contact between refugees and local people. In Bolton, refugees viewed their neighbours as 'polite but distant', while in Brighton, contact was 'extremely limited'. Churches and other places of worship were often important in enabling contact and many refugee families practised their religion. There appeared to have been little overt racism locally and few reported incidents of racist behaviour or of harassment. In Ireland, there had been regular contact between refugees and settled residents, resulting from a befriending scheme run by local people which provided informal support and assistance (Robinson et al 2010).

Amongst the refugees themselves, there appeared to be a divergence of views between those who looked to each other for support (as seemed to be the case in Brighton) and those (for example in Bolton) who wanted better local contacts, arguing that they did not necessarily want to mix with other refugees.

Support for the refugees had been of crucial importance in all locations, although models of support varied. In many places, there had been several dedicated full-time staff, employed by the local authority, Migrant Helpline or the Refugee Council, so there had been a high cost involved. In Brighton, Collyer and de Guerre (2007) suggest that, while the mentoring system offered an ideal way to establish links between refugees and wider British society, the continuing presence of caseworkers might inhibit refugees from becoming more independent and self-sufficient.

Finally, family reunion was an ongoing issue for many refugees who had left family members behind in their own country. Robinson et al (2010) refer to the feelings of sadness which many of their refugee interviewees expressed as a result of this forced family separation.

### **In summary**

The most recent research into the Gateway Programme has been undertaken by Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2011) and helps to summarise many of the issues arising from the individual experiences described above. Their research involved a survey of all adult refugees who arrived between February and May 2009; the majority of these were from Iraq and were settled mostly in the north of England.

Support for the Gateway refugees was strong in the initial (arrival) phase but local authorities are funded to provide support for only 12 months and so the levels of support begin to reduce during this first year. As a result, Platts-Fowler and Robinson found a downward trend in levels of satisfaction during this period. This clearly has implications for the longer term integration of and support for the refugees and this is considered in the next chapter.

The development of language skills was variable with demand for ESOL classes often outstripping supply but all refugees regarded the acquisition of these skills as important. Experiences of housing were similarly varied with greater levels of satisfaction recorded where families were in social rented housing and lower levels in the private rented sector. Yet most refugees were renting privately.

Only three refugees in the survey had experience of paid work although more than a quarter of refugees had done some volunteering.

Other issues included problems in accessing health care (reported by 41 per cent of those surveyed) and some racial harassment.

Thus it is clear that the research studies carried out so far on refugee settlement under the Gateway Programme, have identified a number of important issues as follows:

- High levels of refugee unemployment are creating frustration and forcing refugees to exist on low income levels;
- Housing refugees in the private rented housing sector may lead to problems of insecurity of tenure and long-term affordability;
- Education services are widely valued;
- Acquiring English is seen as very important but access to ESOL classes is sometimes problematic;
- There has been some overt racism;
- Integration into local communities seems to be taking time and many refugees have limited contact with local people;
- Health services operate well but the mental health needs of refugees may not be fully met;
- There are high levels of support for refugees but it may not be possible to sustain these levels beyond the initial 12 month period.

All of these areas are explored in our work on the refugee experience in North Lanarkshire.

## CHAPTER THREE: REFUGEE INTEGRATION

### Previous research

The concept of 'integration' has been described as 'tricky to define, analyze and explain' (Ireland 2004). It is linked to concepts of social exclusion and inclusion which, at the European policy level, were originally associated with the labour market and high levels of unemployment in some parts of Europe. Indeed the social integrationist discourse of exclusion (Levitas 2005) focuses on the importance of paid work in assisting integration. This is particularly important for refugees – especially those who were previously asylum seekers and were denied the opportunity to work; previous research has shown how asylum seekers themselves have prioritised the desire to work (Dwyer and Brown 2005).

Of course, integration is a process and not an end state (Murray 2000) and its achievement will depend on the extent to which refugees are able to participate in a range of social experiences, including democratic participation, social welfare, family and community (Berghman 1995). Research by Atfield et al (2007) shows that refugees themselves prioritise social networking and contact with settled communities, as well as the achievement of equality and citizenship, alongside the more basic needs for housing and employment. Finney and Simpson (2009) suggest that minorities (including immigrants) welcome the opportunity to integrate, and it is the white population which is least engaged with communities other than their own. In research in Scotland, Mulvey (2013) found that refugees were imbued with a desire to make a major contribution to society, partly because they feel they should and partly out of a sense of gratitude for having been granted a safe place to live.

The process of integration really begins on the first day of the refugees' arrival in their new country, although da Lomba (2010) argues that this principle is not fully endorsed by the UK Government. At one level, Government has actively sought to encourage the integration of new migrants and, in an effort to encourage local authority partnerships to facilitate this, the Home Office commissioned research identifying appropriate 'indicators of integration' (Ager and Strang (2004), They posit a framework for a common understanding of the concept of 'integration', which could be used to evaluate services for refugees and other migrants. However, Ager and Strang also point out that an asylum policy which continually emphasises limitation and control will undermine the integration process. Da Lomba (2010) argues that the UK Government is overly focused on the legal process and that asylum seekers are effectively excluded from integrating until they have formally received status and leave to remain. Phillimore (2009) too suggests that the UK's restrictionist policies on asylum send the message to asylum seekers and refugees that they are 'unwanted' and only serve to delay the integration process.

There is a significant body of literature on the experiences of refugees who have resettled in developed countries, at a distance from their country of origin. Issues which commonly arise for refugees in these circumstances include difficulties in finding employment, health problems (particularly in relation to mental health), language difficulties and problems in accessing services (Ager 1999). Many of these difficulties are associated with loss of control over important aspects of one's life and many refugee experiences intensify a sense of living in limbo. Living in refugee camps may have contributed to a loss of dignity, self-esteem, individuality and independence (Sales 2007).

For refugees who resettle within the UK, there are a number of important issues which are crucial to long-term integration. One is employment and Phillimore et al (2006) emphasise the importance of exposing refugees to work experience, possibly through placements, and the accreditation of prior learning and previous qualifications. A second issue is language and refugees frequently see the acquisition of English as essential after they have settled in the UK. Phillimore et al (2007a) explore the various barriers which refugees frequently encounter in relation to accessing ESOL classes, including the accessibility of colleges, transport, lengthy waiting lists and the need to gain work. Women with childcare responsibilities were particularly affected because of limited flexibility in regard to travel and study time.

Health – and in particular mental health – is often an ongoing concern, given the trauma experienced by most refugees. Phillimore et al (2007b) found that few refugees knew how to access support and many believed there were no services which they could access. Some had used their GP, with mixed results; few had been offered counselling. Health providers themselves recognised that they often lacked the knowledge, expertise and resources to provide appropriate services. These findings are partially echoed in the work of Ferguson and Barclay (2002) in relation to asylum seekers in Glasgow.

For Gateway refugees, their legal situation is different from asylum seekers in that they have arrived in the UK with their refugee status assured, but the integration process for them will also begin on Day One. A key difference, of course, is that Gateway refugees are able to work and we have already seen how important employment is to long-term integration. Hynes and Thu's (2008) study of Gateway refugees from Burma and living in Sheffield highlighted the three main challenges facing these refugees as being language issues, problems with technology, and the difficulties associated with living within a different culture and a new environment.

The UK's rather unsatisfactory approach to refugee integration may be contrasted with the approach taken in certain other countries. Hagelund (2006) describes the Norwegian approach which involves a compulsory two-year introduction programme for newly arrived refugees. The aim of the programme is to provide newcomers with the tools that they need to integrate successfully and includes full-time education and training programmes, language classes, and financial support; it seeks therefore to address concerns about both inactivity and exclusion. This contrasts with the UK's lack of coherent integration initiatives which Phillimore and Goodson (2006) believe will simply lead to high levels of unemployment, deskilling and exclusion amongst refugees.

Indeed, integration should be seen as being very much a two-way process. Some individuals become fully part of the host society and cease actively to maintain their original cultural identity and, in these instances, 'assimilation' occurs. At the other extreme, 'separation' occurs when individuals hold on to their original culture at the expense of interaction with the host society. In other instances, immigrants may have little opportunity to interact with others even if they so wish and this may be the result of exclusion from social and economic opportunities; without equality of opportunity, 'marginalisation' occurs. Finally, and importantly, 'integration' occurs when migrants, who may retain their own culture, participate in daily interaction with other groups. It is this last option which is the aim of Government, although, as Berry (1997) stresses, the host society itself has to demonstrate its inclusivity.

Valentine et al (2009) provide a useful illustration of this in comparing the experiences of Somali refugees in Denmark and the UK. In Denmark, the state emphasises assimilation, with the result that the Somalis there now exercise a Danish identity but remain 'strangers' in their new homeland as they find it hard to identify with Danish customs and culture. In the UK, however, a more multicultural approach has allowed the Somalis to maintain their language and culture while developing a sense of belonging to place – in this case Sheffield. As a result, they are able to 'belong' to the UK and to feel more integrated into society.

In such situations, refugee community organisations (RCOs) may be of value in helping to prevent isolation, maintaining cultural contacts, and supporting refugees in establishing themselves. Field (1985) has argued that such organisations may possibly impede integration in that refugees may feel comfortable within their own groups, with less pressure to adjust and learn the language. But, on the other hand, RCOs are a resource for their members, providing practical and emotional support as they try to make their way in the wider society.

## Refugees in Scotland

The approach taken by the Scottish Government towards both asylum seekers and refugees has been somewhat different from that in other parts of the UK, where they have often been portrayed in a negative light. For example, in an explicit attempt to 'counter the negative perceptions that many people hold' (Charlaff et al 2004: 10), the Government (then the Scottish Executive) commissioned an audit of the skills, qualifications and aspirations of asylum seekers and refugees. This audit responded to the First Minister's comments in 2003 on Scotland's need for new immigrants. This approach is indicative of tensions between control of borders through asylum and immigration policy (the preserve of the UK Home Office) and Scotland's need for a supplementary labour force (Wright 2004).

The problems associated with Scotland's population decline and the positive potential of increased migration are well known (Wright 2004). Further, the Fresh Talent Initiative launched by the Scottish Executive in 2004, to attract highly skilled working age migrants to Scotland (Burnside 2004), was a positive political statement about the value of immigration and permitted non-EU students graduating in Scotland to stay for a further two years in employment. However, a separate immigration policy for Scotland has not been possible because immigration remains a matter reserved to Westminster.

The Scottish Government has generally adopted a more positive attitude towards inward migration, partly for demographic reasons and partly because of a distaste for the 'dawn raids' which were carried out in order to deport asylum seekers who were believed to have overstayed. This has helped to create a climate, both social and political, in which immigrants may

be valued. The IPPR (2007), for example, has suggested that Scotland's more positive attitude is in stark contrast to that south of the border. It is possible that a focus on the opportunities presented by immigration, rather than on the difficulties, facilitates the integration process.

In part, this more positive approach may reflect the long history of immigration experienced by the country (and by the west of Scotland in particular). During the nineteenth century, refugees arrived in Scotland from various European countries (Edward 2008). The Irish were particularly significant, and in the mid-nineteenth century, around 18 per cent of Glasgow's population was Irish-born (Audrey 2000).

Audrey (2000) has argued that, in Glasgow and indeed in Scotland as a whole, multiculturalism has more prospect of success than in England, suggesting that the refugee population is more likely to become integrated within Scottish society. She points out that Scottish politics has not been racialised and right-wing parties like the BNP are weak. There is therefore a fairly wide political consensus supporting the Scottish Government's policies of challenging racism and promoting integration, such as its 'One Scotland, Many Cultures' campaign, which demonstrates an awareness of the need to build a more multicultural Scottish society. Second, the Scottish dimension may also be important because Scots themselves may have multiple identities as both 'Scottish' and 'British' – or even 'not English'. Refugees likewise may find themselves able to negotiate multiple identities as part of the integration process.

## Conclusions

In summary, the key problems for refugees identified by previous research relate to accessing employment after a long period of enforced exclusion from the job market; access to education and the recognition of previous qualifications, access to appropriate housing; and long-term integration into local communities and the acquisition of citizenship.

Gateway refugees do not have the same concerns about enforced exclusion from the job market as asylum seekers, as their refugee status is assured. However, gaining employment has become especially difficult in recent years, given the current period of austerity and the economic downturn. In many locations – although not in Motherwell – there are also concerns about poor housing, often in the private rented sector. But the issue of long-term integration is important for all refugees. Evans and Murray (2009) note the importance of social connections, together with safety and stability, for Gateway refugees and they refer to the relative ease with which children were integrating as a result of school attendance, although there were some problems which arose.

We return to these issues in our research into the Gateway refugees in Motherwell and try to assess how things have changed for them during their six years of settlement in the west of Scotland.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This research employed a largely qualitative approach. The data from the questionnaires allowed topics to be explored in depth, and provided comprehensive material for this report.

At an early stage, ethical issues were discussed by the research team and ethical approval to carry out the work was obtained from the University of the West of Scotland's Research Ethics Committee.

### Data collection

This research built on the previous evaluation of the Gateway Programme in Motherwell, carried out in 2008 (Sim and Gow 2008). Support for this follow-up study was provided by North Lanarkshire Council, who made available current information on and contact details for the refugee families. We attended meetings with both NLC staff and also with representatives of the refugee community to inform them of our plans for the second study and to allow them to consider if they were willing to participate. Their consultations within the Congolese community indicated that there was broad support for the work. In fact, as we progressed, it became clear that a small number of individuals did decide to opt out of participating, as was their right.

In developing our questionnaire to be used in the survey, we sought to build on our previous survey, which in turn had been developed using the structure suggested in Ager and Strang's (2004) 'Indicators of Integration': employment, housing, education, health, social bridges, social bonds and social links, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability, and rights and citizenship. The language was checked for ease of understanding. The questionnaire was updated significantly to allow refugees to reflect on their lives in Motherwell during their five years of settlement. The questionnaire is included at Appendix One.

An information sheet about the study was designed, together with a consent form and this was sent to all Congolese households. Some households returned the consent form while others were contacted in a follow-up telephone call.

A total of 18 interviews were carried out during the Spring of 2013, involving 17 households (30 individual participants); in one household, two interviews were conducted as it became clear during the first interview that an interpreter was required and so the interview was repeated. One of the 17 households interviewed was of a family who had been housed in Hull under the GPP but who had subsequently moved to Motherwell, so they had not been part of our sample five years previously. Eight households did not take part in this second study; two decided not to and the others did not respond to contact.

All the interviews took place in people's homes, and lasted from one to two hours. A Swahili-speaking interpreter was present in two of the interviews. The responses were recorded in note form and subsequently transcribed more fully.

Interviews were carried out with the following 'family groups':

Couple (male/female)	x 11
Man alone	x 1
Woman alone	x 3
Man + daughter	x 1
Woman + daughter	x 1

Although interviews were carried out with both men and women, in general the men were more fluent in English and their views often dominated. In order to minimise this, the interviewer tried to ensure that all interview questions were clearly asked to each individual with time being allowed for questions to be fully understood and answered as fully as possible. Sometimes this extended the length of the interview but it allowed the maximum amount of data to be gathered.

## Data analysis

Ager and Strang's (2004) 'Indicators of Integration' framework has been used to evaluate the ongoing experiences of participants in the Gateway Programme in Motherwell in enabling refugees to become integrated into local communities. We have also considered our results in the context of Oxfam's Humankind Index (Oxfam 2012) as this helps to focus on the factors which help individuals' ability to live well within society.

Our findings from the survey are discussed in Chapter Five. In addition, the interviews highlighted a number of ongoing issues for refugees and some areas of continuing need. These issues are discussed further in Chapter Six, where we look to the longer term. Finally, in Chapter Seven, we draw conclusions from our study, measuring our findings against the Oxfam Humankind Index.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

### Introduction

In exploring the experiences of GPP refugees in Motherwell, six years after their original arrival, we have tried to assess the extent to which those experiences have assisted the process of integration.

Ager and Strang (2004: 2-3) have suggested that although 'integration' is difficult to define, a number of factors can be identified that contribute to the process of integration for refugees in the UK. Employment, housing, education and health represent major areas of attainment and can be both the 'markers and means' of integration. While these domains can be seen as the 'public face' of integration, people also experience integration in terms of social connections with individuals and groups. Other important factors are 'language and cultural knowledge', 'safety and stability' and 'rights and citizenship'. Ager and Strang suggest that a framework of ten indicators can be used to assess how far refugee integration for both individuals and communities has been achieved.

The data from our interviews with refugees are reported here, using these 'Indicators of Integration' headings. The quotes which we use to illustrate refugee experiences are taken from notes, recorded verbatim as far as possible. The numbers in brackets after quotes refer to a refugee household database which we used; they have no special significance.

### The Refugee Interviewees

#### Household Profile

The refugee households have a generally younger profile than the Scottish population as a whole. The average age of male refugee interviewees was 35, and of females it was 33. In terms of marital status, 13 were married or living with a partner, one person was widowed and three were separated.

What was noticeable was the significant numbers of children who had been born in the period since arrival in Motherwell. Those households interviewed contained 56 children (all under 18 with one exception who was 19); 23 of those children had been born in the previous six years.

The high birth rate had resulted in a large household size of 5.0. This is more than double the Scottish average of 2.2 or the average for North Lanarkshire of 2.3. It clearly has implications for the provision of housing of an appropriate size and we report on this below.

All but two of the interviews were conducted in English and, as we discuss later in this report, competence in English had grown very significantly, particularly for men. But both men and women tended to use other languages within the household. Of the 30 individuals who were interviewed, 22 were fluent in Swahili, and 17 in French, while other languages spoken were Lingala, Bemba, Luba and Chinyanja.

#### Reflecting on arrival in Motherwell

Before discussing details of their housing and employment, we asked the families to reflect on their experiences of arriving in Motherwell in 2007, and the support which they had received at the time.

Generally speaking, all households had valued the support which they had received and the local authority social workers and local churches were singled out in particular, for the support which they had provided. Neighbours too had been helpful:

*It was useful, good support. The Kingdom church and neighbours were very good. They helped us with clothing and other things (3)*

*Yes – particularly the social worker and the churches, both fantastic (5)*

*The church was very good – they all came together to welcome us and the local Council was very good (6)*

*Support was good. They came every day to help us. If we didn't know maybe how to use machine, Social Work was there for us. They took us to Asda, how to shop, go to hospital for appointments... It was very good for me (19).*

Nevertheless there had been some difficulties. Inevitably perhaps, some families had wanted the support to continue for longer, with regular periodic visits to check on how they were getting on. Some interviewees also felt that the process had been rather rushed and they were encouraged to take jobs for which they were not ready. One individual felt that he had not had enough time to 'weep away the tears', and he and others had not really understood the job applications process. He also felt that a number of private employers did not fully understand why the refugees did not have supporting paperwork about experience or qualifications, and local people did not understand that they 'were just people like them'. Others suggested that, while support was good at the time, it did not necessarily prepare them for future difficulties and they had to learn 'the system' by following the lead of local people:

*Things like having all the furniture, etc. were good, and support was good at the time, but we were not helped to prepare for how to deal with future problems. It was like... mmm ...being taught how to do basic things on a computer, but not being taught what to do when something goes wrong – how to trouble-shoot. People need teaching how the system here works, to know the rules and the background of the system, know the ways of behaving. I try to pick things up from watching others. We need to know what's expected (22).*

One interesting view which emerged was a belief that the support they had received in Motherwell was superior to that received by other Gateway refugees in England. It became clear that many of the refugee families in Motherwell had relatives rehoused in other locations in England under the GPP and so there was a good level of awareness of how different authorities had dealt with the refugee families. Indeed, we have already referred to a GPP family from Hull which actually relocated to Motherwell, while another Motherwell refugee had married a partner from Hull. This continuing contact between Gateway refugees in different locations emerged elsewhere in the interviews and we will return to this later in the report.

*The support received in Scotland far far better than (the) support in England. They left them for a week, two weeks without support. I went down to help my sisters (in Manchester) to help them do things like open bank accounts (4).*

*The Scottish welcome better than what a friend down south got (5).*

*Support was better here than our friends got in England. Everyone here had key worker for one year – women to learn to cook and other things. Only six months in England. We had everything in (the) house – even food in (the) fridge. They had only some things in England and no TV (8).*

Reflecting on their experience in Hull, the family concerned recalled feelings of confusion after they arrived in the UK; they felt they needed more direction:

*There were cultural communication problems. In our culture, when you need help like this, someone will show you and tell you what to do. (The) support worker took us to African shop, and said you can go here to buy food if you want... it's your choice. We went back home and we were confused. We said 'Are they helping us... or not?' We didn't understand. We are used to being told 'Do this' when someone gives help. Like 'you are hungry, eat this food'. We were like drowning. If you are drowning, it's for me to lift you and take you out of the water. It was like asking, 'Would you like me to lift you out of the water?' when you are drowning. It felt to us that they were not being helpful. We didn't know what to do (24).*

A number of households articulated support needs which they felt were still not being met. In the main these related to specific issues, such as employment, housing, education and more advice and support, and so we consider them under those headings.

## Employment

### Employment: Background

At the time of the refugees' arrival in 2007, the lead role in employment was taken by Job Centre Plus. Their task was to try and ensure the financial security of the refugees within their first month in Motherwell, and to help them compete effectively in the labour market, moving into and remaining in work.

Prior to arrival, Job Centre Plus staff liaised with other agencies including the National Insurance Number (NINO) Allocation Team, HM Revenue and Customs and the Benefit Delivery Centre. Representatives from all agencies were present at the induction meetings with each group of refugees, and were able to process the paperwork relatively speedily. Refugees were eligible for Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support and claim forms were processed by the Benefit Delivery Centre; first payments were ready within three working days. HM Revenue and Customs arranged for Child Tax Credit claims to be dealt with quickly and the first payments were posted out within two weeks. Similarly, child benefit payments were made within two weeks. The NINO Allocation Team were able to provide NINOs within 24 hours of the induction meeting. This allowed Job Centre Plus staff to issue personal identification documentation to the refugees, so they could open Post Office accounts for their various payments.

The possession of a NINO also allowed refugees to move quickly into the labour market and each refugee met with a Personal Adviser to discuss their employment aspirations and their needs. Refugees were referred to language courses at Motherwell College, although a number subsequently studied at the local community centre as the college was thought to offer insufficient childcare. In addition, some were referred to the RITeS (Refugees into Teaching in Scotland) programme, some to NHS contacts to discuss transferring and updating nursing qualifications, some to work trials with employers and some to relevant Training for Work courses.

Following this process, a total of 29 individuals were identified as seeking work and, at the time of our previous research, 25 were either in work or were in full-time further education. The jobs which refugees moved into included positions as care workers, labourers, cleaners, foundry workers, scaffolders, laundry workers and supermarket workers. Many of these posts were relatively low paid and some proved to be short-term and so it became clear that there was likely to be a significant turnover in employment. It should also be noted that most of those in employment were men. Although a number of women were keen to work, childcare support was not always available and so many women remained in the home because of childcare commitments.

### Employment: Refugee Experiences

In some respects, the employment situation for many refugees in Motherwell is not dissimilar to the position six years ago. A number of individuals are still in relatively low-paid and insecure jobs, including cleaning, grass-cutting, security, laundry work, packing in warehouses or supermarkets and assembly line work, for example in a bottling plant. The short-term nature of many contracts means that some people have changed jobs quite frequently and sometimes periods of work have been interspersed with periods of study at college:

*I got a job in security – night-shift...felt my brain was not functioning right. I've worked with different agencies, security, factory work and things like that. I'm working right now ... stop for a while, don't have a job until finding another site... Than back on benefit in between jobs... And college... I'm working 30 hours and college...I can manage now, but could change at any time. If the site manager don't like you maybe – that's you (12).*

*I worked as small businessman before... Always worked in warehouse since coming to Motherwell. Went to agency, got job in Morrison's warehouse, first part-time, then full-time after one year – was there for three years. Also agency job next, in East Kilbride, packing – now full-time. (The) place at moment is no problem. People (are) OK (18).*

Another individual was working as a personal support worker for people with mental health issues, which was a rewarding job – but because it involved relief work and occasional sleepovers, it was insecure and unpredictable and so quite stressful. He felt that he had 'expected more', particularly in providing a secure income for his children.

Some people, however, had obtained full-time secure and permanent employment. One individual, having begun in a cleaning job, had moved into a permanent position with the Independent Living Service, supporting people in their own homes. Another had started grass-cutting for the local authority before applying for and getting a full-time job as a Housing Estates Officer. Initially this had been at a basic grade but he had then won promotion. This had led to some jealousy from a few colleagues at work who had harassed him and played tricks like hiding his keys, but he enjoyed the job. He praised the Council for 'giving me the same chances as other people'. In contrast to others who felt they had been rather rushed into jobs when they first arrived, he believed that he had secured a good job partly because he had been determined to find work as quickly as possible.

Some people had had to confront racism at work, with varying degrees of success. One individual had worked for a security firm and believed that he had got on well with the site manager, receiving no negative feedback on his work. But the overall contract manager regularly made allegations about his performance and this he believed was racially motivated. No evidence was ever produced to substantiate the manager's claim, however, but eventually the individual left, believing that his position had been undermined. In another case involving a security company, the refugee concerned was subject to racist taunts. He recorded the incidents and presented the evidence to his manager, but in the face of denials from other workers, he found himself accused of being disruptive and felt forced to leave. Another refugee complained about regularly being asked to work unsocial hours, including Sundays, even though he had previously secured an agreement that he could attend his church on that day. And one worker was the victim of a campaign by her fellow workers:

*I was working in X\_\_\_\_\_ in 2008. Two girls kept reporting me to manager, saying bad things – 'not working good', 'smell bad' ... (The) manager said I should have personal hygiene training. It was very embarrassing. I was angry ... There were two managers there – one good, one bad. (The) good manager had watched me working, knew girls were lying. (But) that manager left, and the other manager was asked to choose someone to lay off. It was me. I feel very bad – racist (9).*

In another situation, however, racist remarks led to the perpetrator being dismissed, although this was later rescinded at the refugee worker's request:

*I got another factory job. No' bad... good, but you need to be strong, to fight. One guy always made very racist remarks. I reported to (the) manager and one man came forward as witness. (The) manager gave him warning, and it was OK for a while, then again, had witness and reported again – another warning. Racist again – I decided I had enough and changed my clothes to leave and went to clock out. Someone told (the) manager and he came after me. We all went into the office and it was said again. The worker was sacked, but he was nearly retired – his face you know... I begged for him to stay. He apologised and begged forgiveness. We shook hands and the guy was good to me. I stayed on – there was still a bit of atmosphere but it was OK, everyone else was fine (9).*

Sometimes workplace experiences were extremely positive:

*I worked in a factory – it was very hard physical job, but helped my integration. It was full-time, so too much to do, English class also, so I left that after a while. It was good for me. I made friends and would go out with them at weekends. They picked me up and we went out to the pub... they took care of me... no trouble. I was there about a year and a half (9).*

Although many refugees expressed frustration at some of their experiences, it was difficult to establish if racism was involved or if it reflected the insecure, part-time nature of the work. Two individuals had worked for a local supermarket but had lost their jobs when it closed and they were not redeployed; others became unemployed at the end of short-term contracts. In other cases, problems appeared simply to be a reflection of poor management or personality clashes. For example, one woman had worked as a care assistant with a private sector care agency for a year, working with elderly people. She had been fully trained and had enjoyed the work but when she applied for another job and requested a reference, this was refused:

*The manager wouldn't give one – she said I was 'not motivated'. Other people had complained about her behaviour – she was just a bad manager (3).*

She emphasised that she did not view the incident as racist but as poor management.

In another incident, one interviewee and his friend had opened a small shop selling groceries and cigarettes. They were attacked twice by men with knives wearing masks, with the second attack seemingly targeting the cigarettes. They lost the bulk of their stock and the individual concerned has been unemployed since. The robbers were subsequently caught by the police, using helicopters, and the attack may not necessarily have been racially motivated.

A number of refugees expressed frustration at not being able to make use of the skills they possessed, with the absence of documentation and certificates being a major problem for potential employers. Some refugees referred to their previous employment experience:

*In the camp I was a receptionist in the hospital, and I was a trained counsellor for HIV and health care advice. Also I used to work with livestock – how to look after chickens, ducks. And as a microcredits assistant – gave advice on how to start your own business and business management. Before that – in Congo – I was a teacher in primary school (3).*

Indeed, a number of individuals had been teachers and some had taken part in work shadowing programmes such as the Refugees into Teaching in Scotland (or RITeS) scheme, run by the University of Strathclyde in conjunction with other agencies. But refugee teachers faced a number of challenges in adapting to teaching in Scotland, including language and differences in educational systems (RITES 2008). Smyth and Kum (2010) refer to the low success rate of the scheme. Indeed, nobody in our sample had apparently obtained employment after attending a work shadowing scheme such as this, and expressed disappointment and annoyance.

As a result, job satisfaction levels seemed rather variable and some people were doing certain jobs merely in the hope of eventually achieving something better. One had recently started a warehouse job which he felt was 'no' bad – no choice', but the hours made it 'too hard to learn', but he 'would like to do something'. After prompting, he stated:

*I want to learn electrical education. I learned painting and decorating and some electrical before. But I need to know how to get qualifications to get on to a course – I do not know how. We need support for education' (19).*

The insecure and low-paid nature of many of the jobs meant that a number of people believed that they did not have enough money to meet their needs and were struggling financially. As households had expanded and children grew up, there was increasing pressure on household budgets, particularly during a time of austerity and welfare reform.

*Not enough... We try to fight hard to get the money we need, to get college qualifications, get good jobs. It is very hard – mentally you spend more than you get. You want shoes for kids... you don't want kids doing without (4).*

And many households had found it impossible to save for bills and / or major items of household expenditure:

*Just enough for absolute necessities, but nothing for things like furniture or wallpaper (indicating peeling wallpaper in the kitchen) (6).*

*No, we struggle hard to meet bills. Our phone is cut off, and we have problems with the council tax. Also we don't understand some issues with accounts and bills (2).*

*Really difficult. It's not the life I'm supposed to live (3).*

One individual suggested that what was needed was a form of positive action. This would involve the use of measures aimed at providing individuals from the refugee community with training to help them improve their chances of obtaining jobs for which they apply. Positive action, suggest Kandola and Fullerton (1994), helps those who are disadvantaged to get to the 'starting-line', creating a 'level playing-field' for disadvantaged groups, and enabling them to compete effectively with other applicants – although it should be recognised that Kandola and Fullerton argue that more fundamental problems with organisational cultures also need to be addressed. Positive action is permitted under UK race relations legislation.

Certainly such an approach might prove fruitful in assisting refugees into improved employment positions, more in keeping with their skills. The higher levels of unemployment across the UK arising from the current recession, however, have made the position difficult for jobseekers generally and not merely for refugees. Nevertheless, a number of large employers in North Lanarkshire were identified as not employing any black or minority ethnic staff:

*(There's) a lack of good jobs – cleaning only. Asda opened its doors here and I applied but nothing. There is not one black person there, or in Wickes or Poundland...'(3).*

### Employment: Summary

In summary, there is no doubt that, when the refugees first arrived in Motherwell, North Lanarkshire Council and its partner agencies had some success in helping many of them – particularly the men – into employment. Indeed, the high proportion of refugees who found work in Motherwell contrasted with the position in England where refugee unemployment was very high.

Looking back, however, there is no doubt that most refugees felt that the process had been too rapid and they were unprepared for work, either psychologically or in terms of their language skills. And many of the jobs which they have undertaken have been temporary and some relatively poorly paid. As a result, there appears to have been a quite rapid turnover in jobs with some refugees moving from one job to another, often on short-term contracts, or experiencing periods of unemployment.

For many refugees, the process of looking for a job can still be confusing and frustrating. A particular problem is the verification of existing skills and qualifications and the absence of paperwork, and the work shadowing schemes have not necessarily assisted individuals into jobs. Many refugees are therefore working at a level below their qualifications and abilities, a position which echoes that identified by Ager and Strang (2004: 14); refugees are frequently 'under-employed' in that many with professional and university qualifications undertake manual employment.

Nevertheless it is important to stress that the employment experiences of the GPP refugees in Motherwell appear to have been more positive than elsewhere. In a study of GPP refugees in four locations in England, Evans and Murray (2009) show that the proportion of individuals working at the time of their interviews was very low, and some had never worked in the UK. In contrast, in Motherwell, of the 17 households interviewed, thirteen were headed by men. Of these, nine were currently working, another was about to start a full-time job, and three others had worked in the past six months. The remaining four households were headed by women, one of whom was a single parent with childcare responsibilities and one of whom was a lone female of retirement age. Because of the large number of young children in the households we interviewed, almost none of the women worked, although many wanted to.

## Housing

### Housing: Background

At the time of their arrival in Motherwell, all refugee families were housed in the social rented sector and signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST). Most of the refugee families were housed by the local authority, with five families in housing association properties. There was no use of the private rented sector, in contrast to the GPP in England.

Families were allocated properties across the town and care was taken to ensure that there was no concentration of refugee settlement. This contrasted with the position of asylum seekers in Glasgow, who have generally been housed in a relatively limited number of areas. The housing which was allocated in Motherwell was of a generally high standard and there was no attempt to use low demand housing. Most of the houses had two or three bedrooms and ranged from terraced or semi-detached houses to flats in three-storey or tower blocks. Nevertheless, it was clear that overcrowding was a potential problem and there was a lack of larger (four or five bedroomed) houses available.

All the properties were newly decorated and a range of furnishings were supplied, partly by the local authority and partly through voluntary sector donations. These included living room furniture (a suite, television and coffee table), bedroom suites, sometimes a computer, and kitchen and household equipment (including washing machine, fridge-freezer, cooker, vacuum cleaner, microwave and kettle). Thus, houses were furnished to a high standard.

### Housing: Refugee Experiences

Of the 17 households interviewed, nine were living in a house with a garden (terraced or semi-detached) and eight in a flat – although in two cases the flats were on the ground floor and had a small garden attached. 14 properties were rented from North Lanarkshire Council and three from a local housing association.

In 10 of the interviews, the family was still living in the same house that they had been allocated on arrival in Motherwell. One family had moved from Hull and six other families had moved house. Reasons for moving included individuals moving in together (two instances) or moves to improve their housing situation – getting a larger house or one with a garden (two cases). In one instance, the family had obtained a transfer because of serious racist behaviour by neighbours. We discuss the experiences of racism later in this report.

Shortly after the arrival of the refugees in Motherwell, we reported fairly high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the housing that they had been allocated. Most families remained broadly happy with their house, although sometimes they had moved into a house which had not been in good condition, for example one family who had obtained a transfer:

*When we were offered the house, it was very very dirty and smelly. It was very bad – the toilet was yellow and the bath was green – the walls were so bad that if you put your hand on it, your hand was all sticky. It took us about two or three months to get it clean, and we had things like sore eyes after it. We had to decorate it all too. We are happy with it now. The children have a backyard to play in, and we are happy with the area (5).*

There were, however, two issues which were raised by families as being of particular concern. One related to the size of the house. It was clear that, as household size had increased, with a number of children born in the previous five years, so housing needs had changed and many houses were now simply too small. A number of people had applied for a transfer but there was a recognition that a move could be disruptive for children and, in any case, some families were reluctant to leave an area which they liked and where they had good neighbours. They had been told that larger houses were very few and far between, and indeed the larger and more desirable houses had often been sold under the right-to-buy.

*I like the house – good inside, but ...I did ask about moving to a four-bedroomed house, but I was told there were none (13).*

*We would like to apply for a bigger house, but we are worried about where. I like this area and the children are happy here (7).*

*We are happy with the housing association and happy with the street and the area – nice neighbours, children play outside and have friends locally. (But) three more children. We have applied for a bigger house, but now waiting around one and a half years (8).*

The other issue which was raised was that of living in a high-rise property. As has been found elsewhere (Sim 2009), this form of housing has proved unpopular with refugee families as it is not one with which they are readily familiar. There were particular difficulties if children had been housed in such properties.

*I have good neighbours – know them for six years. One gave me this TV and desk. (I) don't want to move, but I don't like high-up (11).*

*The inside of the house is OK, but it is not good for the children. We are 16 floors up – from morning till night, they are playing indoors. The neighbours complain, but we have nowhere to go with the children. We need a house for children on the ground floor (22).*

*To be honest, it is not good to live on top of someone else. We are always saying to our children, stop shindos. Do you know what 'shindo' is? 'Step'. We have a number of children (and) we have to keep saying to them 'Stop shindos', because of noise (24).*

This last house had laminate floors which were particularly noisy when the children ran about.

Because house size was clearly an important concern, we sought to assess the levels of overcrowding within the refugee community. We attempted to make a comparison between the size of the houses in which our refugee interviewees were currently living and the size of houses which they appeared to require, using as our guide the allocation policy of North Lanarkshire Council, which states that eligibility for certain sizes of accommodation will be based on the following requirements:

- a bedroom for the applicant and partner
- a bedroom for every adult aged 16 or over (who is not part of a couple)
- a bedroom for every two children of the same sex under 16
- a bedroom for every two children of different sexes aged under 8
- a bedroom for each child of different sexes aged between 8 and 16.

Interviewees were asked about the size and structure of their household and about the size of the property they occupied. Table 5.1 shows the family structure, the size of property occupied and the size of property required, based on the ages of the children concerned.

**Table 5.1: Household structure of interviewees and housing requirements**

Household structure	No.	No. of bedrooms in current house	No. of bedrooms required
Single female	1	2	1
Female plus 3 children	1	2	3
Female plus 3 children	1	3	3
Female plus 4 children	1	3	4
Couple plus 1 child	1	2	2
Couple plus 2 children	1	2	2
Couple plus 3 children	3	2	3
Couple plus 3 children	2	3	3
Couple plus 3 children	1	3	4
Couple plus 4 children	1	2	3
Couple plus 4 children	1	3	5
Couple plus 5 children	1	3	4
Couple plus 5 children	1	3	5
Couple plus 6 children	1	3	5

One household comprises a single female with two bedrooms, so potentially she might be regarded as under-occupying. But, more seriously, we estimate that of the other 16 households, only five are in accommodation of the correct size. Eight households require an extra bedroom and three households require two extra bedrooms. As the existing children grow to be teenagers, then the situation will worsen.

It is difficult to know how the local authority might respond to this unmet housing need. It is widely recognised that black and minority ethnic households are frequently larger than white households and guidance, for example from the Chartered Institute of Housing, has emphasised the need for new build programmes to seek to address shortfalls in the provision of larger houses (Blackaby and Chahal 2000, Perry 2005). But at a time of reductions in the funding available to the public sector, new build housing programmes are limited. Nevertheless, the problem is likely to persist and so, if new build proves not to be an option, then perhaps opportunities may become available to enlarge houses through conversions or extensions.

### Housing: Summary

All refugee families have security of tenure, by virtue of being housed in social rented housing and this remains an important contrast to many English authorities where a significant number of families are in private rented accommodation. In the main, families have remained satisfied with the housing they were initially allocated, although some moves have taken place related to house size and personal circumstances, with racist neighbours also a problem in some instances.

The two main issues which have emerged are the dislike of high-rise living, and the increasing overcrowding which families are experiencing, as households continue to grow. The lack of larger houses in Motherwell makes it difficult to meet the needs of large households, and it also means that the needs of children, as they grow up, are not met. It has not, for example, always been possible to locate families with children near to each other so that refugee children can play with and integrate with other children. This is of course a general difficulty and not one confined to the refugees.

## Education

### Education: Background

When the refugees first arrived in Motherwell, educational preparations took two forms, relating to school education (for refugee children) and language classes (ESOL) for all the families.

All children of school age were initially assessed and supported for a short period at one of the local primary schools, in a bilingual support unit, before being transferred into other primary and secondary schools, once an adequate level of language competence was thought to have been achieved. The schools themselves received additional funding to help provide extra teaching support for the refugee children through the Home Office grant.

There was a view within agencies that children at primary school would find the experience more straightforward as they would generally be working with one or two teachers, who could teach in smaller groups. At secondary schools, where most teachers are subject specialists, there was a concern that refugee children might experience some confusion. Nevertheless, refugee children were seen as sometimes having a greater enthusiasm and willingness to learn than local children, and there was a strong desire to participate in sport, PE and, especially football.

In relation to ESOL classes, all the refugee families met with adult literacy and numeracy staff during their induction period and assessments were made as to their overall competency in English. The local authority set up a beginners' English class operating initially on two mornings a week, later increased to three, as this fitted in with the refugees' other commitments. Later, classes were split into two levels, so teaching could reflect the different and growing levels of language competence. Because the language skills of women were generally poorer, classes continued to be offered, primarily for women, at the local community centre. Some people attended college, where ESOL classes are certificated and many used this as a route into employment.

### Refugee experiences: Adult education

The experiences of the refugees that we interviewed were very varied and relate primarily to the learning of English and to later experiences attending colleges to undertake other courses.

There was a strongly held view that the English classes had been only partially successful. Because the English classes that many people attended were not full-time, this was seen as a disadvantage and more intensive, full-time study would have been more effective, particularly in enhancing individuals' employability.

*I went to Motherwell College English class for two / three months – one afternoon is not enough. After that, I found job helped more (9).*

*I went to English class few times at first. I learned better in street and at work and reading (12).*

*At first we used to go to English classes at Motherwell College, mother and me, two brothers and children. It was a good place to study – staff helpful, but no good, just over three hours a week is not good enough. I did mine in Glasgow, three times a week (10).*

Because classes were not thought to be frequent enough, some individuals felt that they had made only limited progress, a situation exacerbated by new people joining the classes. This meant that classes sometimes contained people with different levels of expertise.

*You forget what you have learned from the previous week, when you go back, when it's just one day ... We learn 'good morning, good morning', then new people join and we are still learning 'good morning, good morning', and we never move (13).*

This lack of progress led some individuals to lose heart with the learning process, with one stating that she was 'tired of learning English' and another asking 'How many years am I supposed to study?' The view was expressed that college staff did not 'stretch' the refugee families enough, intellectually, and that they continually fell back to asking members of the Congolese community to just do more English language study. Refugees also believed that there was too much focus on grammar rather than on 'conversational' English. Because they spoke English with an African accent, some expressed the view that college staff sometimes confused accented speech with an inability to understand or speak and write English competently. This tendency to underestimate the academic abilities of the Congolese community also occurred in relation to schools (see below).

Some individuals, however, had gained Intermediate 2 or Higher grade English at college and had decided to progress to qualifications in specific disciplines and a range of subjects were being or had been studied, including computing, business management, nursing, hospitality, social care and social sciences. Frustration was sometimes expressed at a lack of information as to when to apply for courses, difficulty in accessing courses because of waiting lists, not understanding the timing of the process, and the absence of sufficient crèche facilities was problematic for women. While these difficulties would be experienced by many other applicants for such courses, the Congolese families felt they did not always understand many aspects of the education system.

A number of individuals did talk at length about their experiences of being taught in college, however, and there appeared to be a view that colleges in Glasgow offered a better learning experience than the local Motherwell College, possibly reflecting the fact that Motherwell College is small in comparison to some of the Glasgow colleges. Additionally, the Glasgow colleges have had long experience of teaching asylum seekers and refugees and have extensive provisions in place for learning support.

Perhaps understandably then, there were very varied views about Motherwell College as a place to study. The majority of interviewees believed that it had been unhelpful to them:

*I was studying at Motherwell College (doing) Early Child Care, for two and a half days per week. I missed two weeks, and I was denied a chance to catch up. I felt it was racist ... After that I went to Glasgow College for Higher English – it was fine (3).*

*Motherwell College. Oh my God. Teachers not good, not friendly. No effort. Glasgow college is good, teachers encourage you to ask questions. Motherwell College not helpful – I stopped asking questions (23).*

Some interviewees also felt that they had experienced negative stereotyping at Motherwell and that some staff treated the refugee students as a kind of homogeneous group, rather than as individuals with very different learning needs. On the other hand, it is important to record the praise that other interviewees directed at the College.

*Motherwell College is good place to be. Lecturers good – amazing. They like me, I like them. I had better results than anyone else in class (4).*

*(I'm) almost finished, at City of Glasgow College. The college generally is good, but in terms of lecturer support, I like Motherwell College better. I was doing NC at Motherwell College before that. Lecturers were co-operative there ... Motherwell College always best in helping. My wife is there - her too (12).*

So the adult experiences of education were really rather varied, although there appeared to be a clear pattern of some refugees moving on from basic English language learning, through certificated courses such as Highers, and into subject specific programmes.

#### Education: Refugee experiences: children's education

All those families with children of school age were able to talk about their experiences of the local education system. In our 2008 evaluation of the GPP in Motherwell (Sim and Gow 2008), we reported that all the parents and guardians of the Congolese children reported that they were happy with the schools and nurseries that their children were attending. There was a particular satisfaction with primary schools and with the progress of their children in learning English. Five years on, parents were able to reflect on their children's experiences.

Broadly speaking, parents were still happy with the schools at both primary and secondary levels, although there were some complaints about school discipline and the impact of being with other children. In particular, there seemed to be a view that Scottish children were less respectful than the Congolese children.

*My child became very rude, saying 'shut up' at first ... copied others (9).*

*At home, kids respect adults. Here anything goes ... Passing kids on the street, and kids are swearing at their parents and (you) wonder 'Oh my God - what is going on?'... Kids don't greet you - very rude ... African parents - we tend to be strict with our children (24).*

In a few cases, there had been incidents of bullying and racism at school but mostly they had been dealt with, usually by prompt intervention by the teaching staff. In one instance, a teenager had experienced bullying on the school bus but had spoken to the Head Teacher and things subsequently 'calmed down'. In another case, the parents of a six-year old believed that he was not being included in the play of his classmates. They had spoken to the teacher who had intervened and organised groups for play which included him. They reported that the situation had not only been resolved but that 'he goes to birthday parties now'. A girl who participated in the interviews reported a racist insult:

*It's hard when people call you names. At primary school, I was called the 'N' word. The Head Teacher made the boy apologise and then it was OK. At school, I just ignore if people are talking (23).*

Mostly, Congolese children appeared to be participating in school activities, along with their peers.

*All good. I am just going to school concert. (A) letter came round inviting us. My children are singing (4).*

*Getting on very well. Teaching is very good. I was very proud when we went at Christmas and saw Santa. He was well behaved and joining in everything (9).*

One interesting finding which emerged from the research relates to the levels of support which children themselves felt they had received and an apparent belief that it was insufficient relative to the abilities of the children concerned. We had tried to explore the views of secondary school age children in 2008, when we held a focus group in one of the local secondary schools but at that time their experiences of Scottish education were very limited. But, as we note above, agencies viewed refugee children as having a strong enthusiasm and motivation to learn. During these current interviews, there were some occasions when teenage children joined in and were able to talk about their school experiences and some felt that the Congolese children's abilities had sometimes been underestimated.

One 17-year old boy was very unhappy because his school had said that some courses 'weren't available' to him, because he had been told he was 'not capable' enough. This meant that he had only been able to sit two Highers, both of which he passed, but this was insufficient to allow him to move on to university with his year group. The school had apparently

advised him to attend college to get further qualifications. He felt very strongly that the problem was that he and others had 'not been given any help to catch up' when they were brought back into mainstream classes after being in the special 'learning English' unit at the school. The result was that they were always behind in the work and unable to catch up and he had now been told that he 'wasn't capable' of doing the same number of Highers as his friends.

Another student – a 17-year old girl – felt that her school had simply not 'pushed' her enough:

*I liked school. I went into Primary Seven when I came. We had a support worker who helped us with English, Maths and other work, really helped. I was happy and made friends. I like Secondary too, and we had more learning support in first and second year, then I was OK. I didn't fit in at first, I felt isolated, so I joined lots of school sports clubs, and I became a sporty person, made friends. Last year I stood to be house captain. I didn't get in, but I stood again this year, and got elected that time...*

*One thing I felt is that the school didn't push me, they underestimated me ... As English wasn't my first language, they thought maybe I wasn't capable of achieving. I didn't tell them, just pushed myself – I asked to be moved up to a more difficult group. I got four Highers, all B's (23).*

These reflections provide interesting feedback on learning support for any future GPP programme in the area.

Finally, we asked parents themselves if they participated in any school-related activities. Six interviewees stated that they took part in school parents' nights or related meetings and activities. Many others wanted to but stated that they were simply 'too busy', sometimes with childcare commitments and sometimes because of part-time evening work, to participate.

### **Education: Summary**

It is clear that education was highly valued by the refugees, both in terms of adult education and also at school level. In the case of the latter, families were pleased with – and proud of – their children's progress and schools were viewed very positively. Families were also pleased at the friendships which their children were making.

As far as adult education is concerned, ESOL classes had been valued, although the absence of ongoing full-time classes appeared to be a problem, particularly for women who were often not in paid work and so less able to learn English colloquially in the workplace – although they were often keen to do so. For others, however, there was a pattern of moving on to subject specific programmes which would enhance the employability of the refugee families.

One unexpected finding was the fact that some families believed that they were being insufficiently 'stretched' by their learning and that the abilities of the refugees were being underestimated by teachers. Interestingly this was raised as an issue in relation to both adult and school education.

### **Other services**

#### **Other Services: Background**

In this section, we asked the refugee families about their experiences of a range of other agencies, including health, social work, the police and legal services.

We have already noted how, in the initial arrival period, families were visited by social work staff from the local authority, who helped them settle in and assisted them with a range of practical tasks. In addition, refugees were provided with information about the role of the police, received talks from the police about community safety and told how to report racist incidents, if any occurred.

In regard to health, NHS Lanarkshire had participated in the planning process prior to the arrival of the refugees, and had tried to anticipate health needs, both physical and mental. Public health nurses were part of the group welcoming the refugees to Motherwell on their arrival. All refugees were helped to register with a GP and each family received an initial appointment. Thereafter, services were made available as and when required, using interpreters where necessary. The NHS provided basic information to refugees about services and translated some leaflets into both French and Swahili. Refugees were also been advised about emergency services and the use of 999 phone calls. Tenancy Support Workers advised families on the services provided by dentists and opticians and helped refugees register with the appropriate practices.

We were also interested in any other services which refugees had used, including legal advice or more general assistance, from a refugee organisation or Advice Centre.

## Health Services

All those interviewed had made contact at some time with a range of health services, including their GP, hospitals and dentists. Almost everyone was satisfied with the services they received and, for most families, the only difficulties were those of communication. For example, one person stated they had difficulty talking to the doctor's receptionist both over the phone and in person, particularly when trying to explain that he needed to see the doctor more urgently than normal. Another interviewee had gone to the GP when her daughter had a broken tooth, not realising that she should have gone to the dentist.

But as one interviewee said, in praising her GP:

*(I) had problem communicating at first. Now we just keep going, until we understand (11).*

Children's health was an issue raised in some interviews, and injuries requiring hospital visits were problematic in terms of the cost and difficulties in getting to the hospital. It should be noted that the local hospital is not in Motherwell itself but in Wishaw, to the south east of the town.

In our original report (Sim and Gow 2008), we discussed the issue of mental health problems which were thought likely to surface, as a result of the refugees' experiences. We felt unable to ask directly about such a sensitive issue in this survey but a number of interviewees exhibited visible signs of distress, especially when talking about family members still in Africa, and so we believe that a number of significant mental health problems do exist.

## Social Work Services

Everyone had had contact with the social work services at some point, although many people had not had dealings with them since their initial arrival in Motherwell. Sometimes, individuals had met social workers in the street but there had been very little formal ongoing contact. Nevertheless, the support which had been provided at the time was highly rated.

*Yes, at first they used to come here all the time, to help me with forms. She took me everywhere. I did not know everything. She applied for all the things. She was good (4).*

## Police

All but four interviewees had made contact with the police and, in general, individuals were happy with the service they received, although perceptions were inevitably affected by the outcome of the incident concerned.

Some individuals had called the police in relation to incidents of racism for example. One individual had been attacked by his neighbour and sustained a back injury; the perpetrator had been charged by the police, although the outcome of the case was not known. The interviewee remained fearful:

*Police came to see me every week for about two months, to check everything was OK, then stopped. I have emergency police contact number. Since then, people all ignore me in the street – some were OK before. When I am walking in the street and I see those people coming I change my way to avoid them (18).*

Another interviewee had called the police to report that her car had been vandalised and was unhappy that there had been insufficient evidence to prosecute:

*My car was broken – I believe it was the neighbours who did that, about a year ago. But I'm not happy, as they said they weren't able to do anything. But the neighbours have been quiet since then (10).*

But the police were praised for helping deal with an incident of minor vandalism and for finding a missing child.

*'Yes. When I had to stay in hospital with my daughter, my window was broken – they helped to get it fixed (3).*

*My brother went to visit his friend and didn't come home all night. My mum was very worried – she didn't know if he was OK. It turned out he had just stayed at his friend's but he didn't tell us. My mum called the police – they were really nice and friendly. They looked at his room, and they asked what he was wearing and things like that. They asked us where his friend's house was – we didn't even know exactly, we just pointed. They went away and a few minutes later they found him. They asked all the right questions (23).*

And in another incident, a refugee had had to call the police to help one of her neighbours:

*One time, at three o'clock in the morning, my neighbour got very drunk, she was shouting and crying. When I went to the door, she had her clothes off, and was crying. I called police, and they got an ambulance for her. She came to my house next day and apologised (11).*

In the main, therefore, the police were viewed positively by the refugee community, although the handling of racist incidents has sometimes proved problematic. We deal with this area in more detail later in the report.

### **Legal Services**

Eleven interviewees told us that they had been in contact with a lawyer during the previous five years, most often through the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre or the Citizens Advice Bureau. The majority of consultations were in relation to achieving UK citizenship, to obtain travel documents, or about family reunion.

Most people were satisfied with the service they received from lawyers, although not with the citizenship process itself, which we discuss later.

### **Other Advice**

Refugee families had consulted a very wide range of organisations in obtaining advice and information. The areas for which they sought advice included employment, welfare benefits, education and family reunion and, in most cases, they had received appropriate advice. Many found the issue of family reunion distressing, however, not least because families did not have the resources to help other members of their family come to the UK. Some felt that they had been misled into believing that the process would be more straightforward than it actually was.

The organisations most frequently consulted had been the Scottish Refugee Council and the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre while others mentioned included the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), the Red Cross, and employment organisations like the Refugees into Teaching in Scotland (or RITeS) project, or the Bridges Programme, a work shadowing scheme.

If advice was required in the future, most refugees identified the CAB as the most appropriate for day-to-day assistance with a range of issues, not least because of its high visibility within the town. Informal connections, such as 'Scottish friends' and local churches, were increasingly important.

### **Other Services: Summary**

At the time when refugees initially arrived in Motherwell, the support from the local authority, particularly social workers, together with help from agencies like the Scottish Refugee Council, were extremely important. As they have settled locally, the SRC and the Social Work Department have become less significant and families increasingly look towards agencies like the CAB for help with day-to-day matters, not least because they have on-street premises near the Council offices. Support from friends and churches are also very significant.

There are ongoing and unresolved issues such as citizenship and family reunion, and we deal with these later.

## Social Connections

### Social Connections: Background

Ager and Strang (2004: 4) have identified three domains within the heading 'social connections', namely:

- Social bridges: with members of other communities;
- Social bonds: connections within a community defined by, for example, ethnic, national or religious identity;
- Social links: with institutions, including local and central government services.

The issues identified by Ager and Strang under these headings tend to overlap and, in our previous research we found it difficult to distinguish between them. We therefore discuss a range of issues relating to 'social connections' including satisfaction with the local area, with neighbours and with the broader Motherwell 'community', involvement in community groups and faith groups, and continuing connections within the Congolese community itself, as well as developing friendships more widely.

In 2008, we established (Sim and Gow 2008) that the refugees were 'settling' in Motherwell and beginning to make friends with Scottish people. The process was easier for children and younger people who were attending school and perhaps also for those men who were in employment. Women who remained at home with children did not mix as much and so were less able to make friends.

It was widely accepted that it was perhaps too early for refugees to feel comfortable participating in local organisations, although the important exception to this was church attendance, and churches were an important part of life for all refugee families.

Although refugees saw each other regularly and maintained contact with each other, they did not necessarily see themselves as a 'group'. Generally, they appeared to be resistant to the formation of a locally-based refugee community organisation specifically for Congolese families, as there was a widespread belief that this would inhibit integration with the wider Motherwell 'community'.

### The Neighbourhood

We asked families if they felt happy living in their local area and if they thought it was one which was friendly and where people got on well together. Respondents tended to speak of their local area rather than Motherwell as a whole and all but two stated that they were happy living in the area. They believed that they had gradually made friends with their neighbours, although sometimes it had been a slow process. There had been a degree of wariness and some racism on the part of some neighbours initially but barriers had gradually broken down.

*They are very nice people – very lovely people (9).*

*It is hard work ... Near neighbours OK now, but complained about things when we first came. (We) got to know each other, and they overcame their prejudices. Now, help each other put out bins and borrow the lawn mower. (6).*

*Yes, happy. Any problems, we try to sort them out. If we have difficulty with neighbours, it's OK – we can talk to each other (4).*

*Yes, North Motherwell is a good area. Good buses, good primary school near, post office, GP, shops, all very near, and church too (13).*

Where families had children, this often helped with neighbour relations if children played together:

*Yes I like this area. Neighbours are like family – so helpful. Kids can play outside and they all go in each other's houses to eat, and to play together (3).*

*Yes, the local area is fine – I would like to stay here. No problems here. (The) girls chap (knock) on door and they go out to play. Motherwell is fine (8).*

*It's kind of good in summer, we are close to the park and Strathclyde Park too. (But) there is not much to do – young people have to go to Glasgow to shop or ice skate or things like that (23).*

There had, however, been a number of difficulties with individual neighbours. Not all children were encouraged to play together and some families had been on the receiving end of vexatious complaints which could be interpreted as racist. For example, two families who were living in a tower block reported that neighbours had complained constantly about the noise their children made and this had developed into broader expressions of racism. In one instance, the family had gone to a mediation meeting organised by the Council but the neighbour had walked out and taken no further part in the proceedings. As a result, there had been no further complaints.

One family had been appalled to find excrement left on their doorstep, while another complained about a neighbour knocking on their adjoining wall and throwing rubbish into their garden. The extent of the rubbish suggested that it was being done not just by the neighbour but also by members of their extended family and there was a substantial amount of litter in the garden at the time of the interview.

Interviewees were clear that such incidents were not the norm and distinguished between those neighbours who were friendly and supportive and those who were not. There were racist overtones in the behaviour of some neighbours, which was ongoing and distressing. For example,

Our near neighbours are good – we help each other. But sometimes have problem with some others. One family came here a year ago, they are troubling us a lot – they deliberately walk through our garden and leave the gate open to annoy us. Their sister works in [a local shop], and always looks away when we come in. There was another neighbour family who used to speak to us, but since then they have stopped and the husband points at us (7).

There was a recognition that ‘people are good and bad everywhere’, that racist attitudes may occur quite widely and that white people in Motherwell might have similarly variable experiences with their neighbours. On the other hand, the high profile which was given to the Congolese families when they first arrived in Motherwell may have inadvertently created some of the difficulties. The local authority had been keen to publicise the plight of the refugees and portray the Council’s participation in the Gateway Programme as a humanitarian action. Indeed, the arrival of the refugees had been the subject of a BBC Scotland documentary. But it made some Congolese families feel as if they were in a ‘goldfish bowl’ and local families may have resented the support which refugee families were being given. This mirrors the situation in areas which housed asylum seekers under the Government’s dispersal scheme. Some local people expressed resentment at asylum seekers being allocated furnished properties in ‘their’ areas, a resentment which was often exacerbated by media coverage (Greenslade 2005, Sim and Bowes 2007). Comments made by our interviewees included:

*Not happy in Motherwell. It was nice to have us from Africa to here, but I would prefer to be in a place where no-one knows our life ... When we arrived, they put our life on the TV ... I need freedom, I want to be where no-one knows why I came here, no-one knows my life (10).*

*Part of the problem is that people don't know what's going on outside of the UK ... Many people in Motherwell have never gone out of their country. They don't understand what it is like somewhere else. They have never travelled. It would be easier if they had – they would understand better. They think you came here for a better life – is this a better life? When you see someone earning money, it seems much, but when you spend it, it's not so much. Easier to earn a living in Congo than here. With 100 dollars a month, you can save and buy land, after about ten years you have your own house. (16).*

This last comment appeared to reflect discussions which had taken place within the Congolese community as part of an attempt to understand why some local people had adopted hostile attitudes towards them. The comment about money reflected an awareness of the importance of money in terms of the quality of life which it could bring.

## Being Part of the Community

Almost everybody stated that they had made friends within the local community, some with neighbours and some through their jobs.

*I left (the job) nearly two years ago, but I still have friends – yes. Too many. They teach me language, like 'gonnae no' dae that' (laughing) (9).*

Churches were particularly important in making friendships and almost all refugees were active in churches of various descriptions. Amongst the various denominations mentioned were the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodists, Kingdom Hall (Jehovah's Witnesses), New Apostolic Church (in Glasgow), the Pentecostal Church of Redemption and the Kings Church. Many of the refugees sang in the church choirs or took part in other church-related activities.

One individual was a lay pastor who was very active in his church and who had studied theology at an evangelical college. He often held prayer meetings at home:

*(We) learned about global culture and observation of churches ... (I) help people to speak together and meet together ... to identify needs (6).*

Children were also important catalysts in helping friendships develop. As noted earlier, some refugees attended school parents' nights, for example, and families with children had become friends with the parents of other children with whom they played. The strength of these friendships obviously varied.

*Yes, kids are like the link between families. (They) share bus, chat at door (3).*

There were also some youth activities. Following the refugees' arrival in Motherwell, a group of Congolese young adults and teenagers began attending a weekly music group attached to the Reeltime group in Newarthill, north east of Motherwell. The members of the group had learned to play various instruments, and they had made a short film, with backing music, about the experience of settling into life in Motherwell. One of our interviewees who had been involved in this, emphasised its importance. Further initiatives had been developed:

*We have a youth group – Genesis Youth Group. We do drama, we dance, watch film/videos. 21 members, mixed Congolese, Scottish, and Uganda. Waverley Care help pay rent for time in Community Centre. (4).*

Football was also an important mutual interest between local people and the refugees, particularly for the men, although a girls' team had also started.

*We used to go and play football with other local men, in summer. Probably will do again (8).*

*We also have a football team – Congolese community team. We were very bad at first, we were just terrible, we had to walk off... We are better now. A Pakistani guy came to where we were training, and invited us to join team in Glasgow. He was involved with Fir Park<sup>4</sup>, from the SFA... We go to Fir Park now and do activities. (We) had a coach for two months and we beat our first team! Many are now doing a referee course in Cumbernauld (4).*

Despite the involvement of many refugees in local community activities, almost half were not active in community organisations. Many were conscious of certain cultural differences between themselves and the wider Motherwell community. Several people drew attention to the levels of drinking, smoking and drug-taking which occurred in the town and with which they felt extremely uncomfortable. Another individual felt that Motherwell people were rather reserved. In part, this may be due to a wariness between the 'locals' and the refugees but the Scots were, in any case, thought to be less open than Africans.

<sup>4</sup> Fir Park is the ground of Motherwell F.C., the local club.

*Approaching someone, you need to have more reserve ... an African way (is) more open, friendly, probably put more trust in your friends (12).*

*We try to understand and to respect people's culture, behaviour, space. Individuals don't talk if they don't know each other ... they are afraid to talk to someone they don't know. I try to respect the way it is and the way people are living (7)*

*People are very reserved (in UK). We meet everybody and talk on the street – here nobody talks (23).*

*Our culture means we can just pop in to visit each other's homes any time. We don't need to phone even – not like the way here (5).*

These comments illustrated a feeling that there was perhaps not the sense of community cohesion and mutual responsibility for each other and for maintaining community standards and values that the Congolese people were used to. One couple talked of their experiences of watching a fight in the street from the window of their flat in a multi-storey block and being quite shocked that nobody appeared to be intervening. They thought this was symptomatic of a society where such behaviour was often tolerated.

*Africa is a strong society. We are friendly people and trust each other. Here, we have had to change – here it is the 'individual' and 'anti-social behaviour people'. (We have) had to change way of being in society (22).*

But, to varying degrees, people felt part of the community.

*I feel like a person in Motherwell. If I wasn't here, where would I be? My grandchildren (are) here and my children (11).*

*(I've) been here six years. If I don't understand, I ask (9).*

*Women chat to each other – especially older people, they are very good (7).*

And some individuals were starting to join various groups, other than those associated with churches and the schools.

*One of the neighbours tells me about children's events. But there is a green group – environment group, that I would like to be involved in. We want our intelligence to be large, and to feel more confident to ask. I would like to join (7).*

### Contact within the Refugee Communities

We have already noted how the Congolese families had been rather resistant to the establishment of a Refugee Community Organisation in Motherwell, as they believed that this would hinder their long-term integration. In fact, a Motherwell African Refugee Community Association (MARCA) had been formed but it does not appear to have support across the refugee community. Only one interviewee spontaneously mentioned MARCA, although others were asked if they were involved. Of the ten interviewees who commented about the organisation, seven were negative and one ambiguous. Those who were negative about MARCA seemed to believe that the organisers were self-appointed and did not conduct their affairs in a transparent way, so they do not, on the face of it, appear particularly representative of the refugees as a whole.

Only two of our interviewees therefore specifically stated that they were involved with MARCA. The rest stated that they were not involved with any refugee groups, although many people were in regular contact with other refugees on a personal basis. There were a number of individuals who were in contact with Congolese or other African families living in Glasgow, where there were obviously very much larger refugee communities. Motherwell was sometimes seen as rather limited in that regard:

*We are friendly with South African neighbours and Nigerian people in Forgewood ... We met in the street, and made friends and children play together ... African people in Glasgow see each other, meet each other, support each other. Congolese people here are friends, but it is a very small community (19).*

What emerged significantly from the interviews was the strength of the various relationships which had developed while refugees were living in camps in Zambia. Following intervention by the UNHCR, refugees had been moved to a range of locations under the Gateway Programme – to other cities in England and to other countries – and the reasons for these decisions were not always clear, as some families had been split up. Indeed, one interviewee had a sister in Manchester, another a sister in Denmark. But contact was maintained as far as possible.

*We keep in touch with friends from the camp – in Norway, USA and Australia, and some still in Zambia ... telephone, Skype, facebook. Why are we here? – no choice. UNHCR selects case stories that need humanitarian intervention, put them in a list, then countries who are interested collect dossier and decide e.g. who is going to UK. Call you and interview again, until your story matches, and the visa then to come to UK. Others, maybe Norway, others, still there (24).*

*We have refugee friends in other countries – Canada, Australia, USA (16).*

*We have family in Hull and Norwich – auntie and friends. We keep in touch by phone (8).*

*Sister in Manchester, friends in Hull, Norwich. We will visit for wedding soon. (9).*

Within Motherwell itself, almost all families kept in touch with each other very regularly. There were frequent visits to each other's houses, often in relation to family events – new babies, children's parties, illness or bereavements.

*Yes, I talk to all of them. We meet a lot, children's birthdays, any occasion. Also for support when people are ill and things like that. We go and see each other ... talk about problems (8).*

*We also meet at Christmas, New Year, and all things like that, and at celebrations and births and deaths and times like that (5).*

*See nearly everybody. We look after each other, if someone is sick or have a problem. I have my baby – everyone come and bring cards and gifts for baby (pointing to large number of cards on the television). We enjoy and share (9).*

*We meet together quite often, maybe children's party or when there is a problem. Recently met up here – death of my mother's youngest sister in Congo. All collected money – sent Congo for coffin (11).*

### Social Connections: Summary

In summary, many refugees were still settled in their local areas and had made friends with local people. There had been some negative experiences and there was a feeling that some local people were a little reserved, but most refugees believed that this simply reflected the wide range of human nature, with 'good and bad everywhere'.

At the time of the refugees' first arrival, there had been a belief that a Congolese refugee organisation would act as a barrier to integration. Although this was not explicitly stated during these follow-up interviews and an organisation had been established, it did not appear to be supported by the majority of refugees.

Churches continued to be very important to the majority of refugee families and had been key to helping them to make friends and integrate.

## Language and cultural knowledge

### Language and culture: Background

We have already discussed the issue of language skills above, under Education. At the time of their initial settlement in Motherwell, some refugees had relatively good English language speaking skills and this was particularly true of the male Congolese. Reading and writing skills were much less well developed.

Professionals believed that, during their first year of settlement, the language skills of most refugees had improved, particularly among those who were in employment and those children who were attending school. Skills were enhanced significantly by attendance at ESOL courses, where possible. Many women, however, still spoke poorer English, as they had generally fewer opportunities to converse with local people. They were less likely to be in employment, had fewer opportunities to attend ESOL classes because of childcare issues and were not being offered opportunities to progress their conversational English because of the limited instruction at the community centre classes.

It was also recognised that the local accent and the use of Scottish dialect words would be a problem for many refugees and this was borne out by the comments of the refugees themselves.

### Language and culture: Refugee experiences

In our current research, we asked the interviewees to reflect on their language skills and to provide their own ratings of their abilities; these are shown in Table 5.2, below. We also show (in brackets) the scores which we recorded in our research in 2008 (Sim and Gow 2008). As might be expected, there are many fewer refugees identifying their language skills as 'poor', a reflection of their long-term exposure to English. On the other hand, fewer refugees appeared now to be claiming that their skills were 'excellent', which was perhaps unexpected. It may be that exposure to English language speaking over a six year period, during which families have had to get used to both a new language and also a particular Scottish vernacular accent, has led some individuals to reassess their skills. It may be that the most recent assessment of language skills is perhaps more realistic and suggests that, for some people, there is still some way to go before complete fluency is attained.

Two families pointed out that learning English had been particularly difficult for them, as they had grown up in a French-speaking country. They therefore felt disadvantaged compared with refugees who had moved to the UK from a British Commonwealth country.

*They should understand it is more difficult for people from colonies that speak French. It is like if you went to Paris and, right away, had to read and write French (19).*

*Children's English language skills were generally good, as this is the language that they use every day in school.*

*That's their language. They are better than us (4)*

Table 5.2 Competence in English language

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Missing
How well do you understand what you read in English?	6 (5)	10 (4)	8 (2)	2 (6)	4
How well do you understand what you hear in English?	3 (4)	16 (9)	7 (3)	(2)	4
How well can you write in English?	1 (3)	10 (4)	11 (4)	4 (7)	4
How well can you speak in English?	2 (4)	14 (7)	8 (5)	2 (2)	4
When speaking English, how well can you:					
... talk to people in shops in English?	6 (9)	16 (3)	3 (3)	1 (3)	4
... talk about everyday things to English-speaking friends?	6 (5)	16 (6)	2 (1)	2 (3)	4
... hold a conversation with English-speaking friends?	6 (4)	16 (6)	1 (2)	3 (5)	4

And many of the parents believed that it was important that their children retained their knowledge of French and / or Swahili, partly to reflect their cultural background and partly to ensure that they were able to speak to members of their family still in the Congo.

*I speak to them in English and Swahili. They don't speak Swahili much, but I would like them to speak in Swahili and French. (The) eldest child can, but the little ones can't – but they can understand. I would like there to be classes in Swahili (3).*

*We use Swahili at home to children – they reply in English. I would like them to speak Swahili – it is important. We have family in Africa and they have to be able to talk to them (8).*

*I speak French to the kids and some Swahili. It is very important to keep our language, so they can speak to their grandparents (9).*

*I talk to my child in French, and use French cartoons for him and programmes. My wife talks in Swahili and English (12).*

Only three of our interviewees stated that they might make use of an interpreter as they felt their English was relatively poor, and we used an interpreter in only two interviews, both with women. In 2008, we had required an interpreter on five occasions. Nevertheless there were certain specialised situations where an interpreter was recognised as being potentially helpful, for example in discussing health issues at the hospital or in dealing with lawyers.

In regard to local accents, these were gradually becoming less of a problem, perhaps because many of the children were now speaking with Lanarkshire accents. But if local people spoke quickly or used dialect words or slang, then this made conversations difficult.

*I can't understand pure Scottish – American English accent easier to understand. TV. Helps. American is clearer. Scottish is 'deep', 'heavy' – even when they say three times sometimes difficult to understand (11).*

### Language and Culture: Summary

The acquisition of English language skills was seen by all refugees as a crucially important aspect of their settlement in Motherwell. Interestingly, as we note in the table above, skills had improved significantly for some of those who had previously believed their language skills were 'poor'. But others appeared now to recognise that their English skills were perhaps not as good as they had initially thought. Speaking and understanding English was widely regarded as much more straightforward than reading and writing it, although some refugees still struggled to understand the local accent in everyday conversation.

The English language skills of children were viewed as excellent, as they clearly use English every day in school. Children were, however, in danger of forgetting French and Swahili and losing touch with their cultural background and their relatives still in the Congo. Families sought to retain their roots by consciously using their own language at home and so there appeared to be a divergence between the languages used at home and elsewhere.

When we undertook our research in 2008, refugees spoke of the importance of retaining African values (particularly in relation to child rearing), and also in relation to African food, with a local food co-operative important to them. We did not ask specific questions about cultural values this time but, during interviews, many refugees spoke of the differences between local people and themselves, for example in terms of local people being more reserved than Africans, and an apparent lack of community cohesion in the area. Aspects of behaviour such as the greater prevalence of drinking and drug-taking were specifically disapproved of. The African food co-operative, which had been valued by many families, no longer operates.

## Safety and Stability

### Safety and stability: Background

It was recognised by all agencies at an early stage that they needed to publicise their involvement in the Gateway Programme and to make local people aware of developments. In that sense, lessons were learned from the arrival of asylum seekers in Glasgow where local residents often felt insufficiently informed about what was happening and this led to rumour and hostility towards the new arrivals (Barclay et al 2003). A major concern was to try and avoid any racist incidents occurring within Motherwell and the media strategy was developed partly with this in mind.

Upon their arrival, refugees were provided with information about the role of the police, received talks from the police about community safety and told how to report racist incidents, if any occurred. Local agencies believed that the most important issue for refugees was to have the confidence to report such incidents and not to feel that such behaviour had merely to be tolerated.

In the event, no racist incidents had been reported officially at the time of our 2008 research. That is not to say, however, that tensions did not exist and almost all refugees were able to talk of incidents which had affected them.

### Safety and stability: Refugee Experiences

Twelve of our interviewees stated that they felt safe living in Motherwell, although occasionally there was a feeling that the police could do more, perhaps with a more visible presence. One refugee felt that if he regarded others respectfully, this would be reciprocated:

*I don't go into other people's problems – that's when you become unsafe. I try to respect and not annoy people – try to be nice to people and people are nice – say hello (4).*

As well as feeling relatively safe, six people stated that they had never felt threatened in the area. Nevertheless, most families were able to talk about racist incidents which they had experienced.

In many cases, such incidents consisted of verbal abuse, a kind of 'casual' racism. Remarks which were made included 'Go back to the jungle', 'Why don't you go back where you came from?' and being called a 'monkey'; two refugee interviewees reported being abused on buses for speaking Swahili on their mobile phones and told to 'speak English'. Sometimes remarks had been overheard in public places and had not been directed specifically at an individual, such as comments about 'black people taking our jobs'. One individual had reported an incident of verbal abuse, which they saw as sustained and threatening, to the police and the perpetrator had been charged.

Some older refugees appeared to suggest that such abuse was not unexpected, that it was due to a minority of individuals and should mostly be ignored. Some interviewees referred to there being 'good and bad everywhere'.

*No, not experienced (racism). People are people – same in Congo. Some people will laugh and some will point at people. Don't know whether it's the colour of your skin or not (11).*

Younger Congolese people, however, appeared less willing to tolerate it, perhaps due to a greater political awareness, higher expectations of equality or simply being physically more able to react. One man in his twenties, with a white girlfriend, described the abuse which he had experienced.

*It's common thing – cannot avoid it. Walking past flats near here, there is voice from window many times (saying) 'n \_\_\_\_\_, black bastard'. I answered and then I shouted back up to show themself. It stopped after that.*

*Most people in Motherwell are fine. It's some people are sick in the head. When I was younger, my girlfriends were mostly Scottish. We went to the fireworks at Strathclyde Park, we two black friends and Scottish girlfriends. There was a group of about twenty (saying) 'n \_\_\_\_\_ bastards'. They would not have done that if there were more black people.*

*We used to go to clubs – remarks (like) 'Are you going out with that n \_\_\_\_\_?' I stopped going and we arranged to meet in our houses. My girlfriend would get fed up (12).*

This experience echoes with the views of other refugees who believed that those responsible for racist incidents were most likely to be young adult males; older people were more tolerant and less racist.

In other incidents, refugees reported being watched by security staff in shops, ignored in queues at supermarket tills, or having their bus tickets examined in an over-zealous manner. These incidents appeared deliberately designed to create discomfort for the refugee concerned.

There had also been some instances of physical abuse, including being spat at and having stones thrown. One person had had their house attacked by a group of men wielding bottles and large sticks. The following day, he had seen one of the perpetrators, reported him to the police and he had been charged. In another case, a refugee family had been targeted by one of their neighbours:

*About one year ago, I was attacked by neighbours upstairs. There are a lot of big families here, all related. The neighbours drink, smoke and piss in close. This neighbour kept putting rubbish next to door, and then started throwing rubbish right out of the window into the garden. I shouted up that they must clean it up, clean the area, or I will report you. They wouldn't clean it up. I called the police. Neighbours said it was 'accident'. Police reported it to anti-social, and I spoke to them.*

*That is the beginning of happening. I was on the street, and he stabbed me in the neck with syringe. The police told me to go to the hospital and have tests. I had to go back next day for results. I went out of house to go to hospital and they were waiting for me. They had bottles, big stones, they kept hitting me. It was very bad. I have scars all over, neck, hands, body.*

*I managed to run away, called police. The neighbour was charged by the police – I don't know what else happened to him then. I still take painkillers for pain in my back (18).*

In another incident,

*I was inside a phone box, talking on the phone. A man opened door, pointed a knife at me and said 'Move'. I tried to run away, but he ran too. I took out my mobile phone and shouted I was calling the police. He ran away. It was good we were given mobile phones – it saved me. Nothing since (9).*

We have already referred to certain neighbour disputes, sometimes involving threatening behaviour or the dumping of rubbish, which clearly have racist overtones. Often it has been difficult to obtain proof sufficient for action to be taken. One refugee, having complained about a neighbour, found herself the object of a counter-complaint and threatened with court action and a fine. The use of dogs to threaten some families has also occurred:

*Men in the other tower block nearby have dogs, and when they see me coming they open the gate to let the dogs out and throw their football outside to alert the dogs. The dogs have chased me and I had to use my bag to protect myself. They shouted at me 'This is not your country' and other racist things. There was a woman there, who saw what was going on, the third time, and she said she felt ashamed. They saw the CCTV, and shouted that I was 'lucky'. I have had to change my route to walk a longer way (16).*

Refugees also referred to occasional racist incidents at work. Sometimes these were unresolved but sometimes employers took action to prevent a recurrence. We have discussed these incidents in the Employment section earlier.

### Safety and stability: Summary

The preliminary work undertaken by officials appeared to have an initial impact, in that Congolese refugees were welcomed into Motherwell and there were no racist incidents reported officially – although some may have occurred.

But over the last six years, it is clear that there have been a number of racist incidents at work, in public places and involving neighbours. Most incidents have involved verbal abuse but in some instances, there have been physical attacks on individuals. This may reflect a greater willingness on the part of the refugees to report these incidents and not to tolerate them.

Some refugees were setting such incidents to one side, so as to get on with their lives. Many of the interviewees appeared to be somewhat philosophical about the incidents, recognising that they had been committed by a very small minority. The fact that, in a number of cases, perpetrators were charged suggests that the racism is not being tolerated by the police and the courts, although in some cases, it has proved difficult to obtain the necessary evidence. But the fact that many refugees are choosing to ignore rather than to report some racist incidents means that there has been an inevitable under-reporting. It should also be argued that the refugees should not have to make such choices and that all incidents should be reported.

Within the context of the town of Motherwell, the Congolese are obviously a very visible minority group and North Lanarkshire has a relatively small black and minority ethnic population – 2 per cent of the total population according to the 2011 Census. Nevertheless, the area does have a long history of inward migration, involving white minorities (Irish, East Europeans and other migrant workers) (Rodgers 1980, Sim et al 2009) and this shared memory of immigration might lead local people to welcome new migrants into their midst.

### Rights and Citizenship

#### Rights and citizenship: Background

For the Congolese refugees, some aspects of citizenship are less directly relevant to them; unlike asylum seekers, for example, they have not had to wait for status and the right to live permanently in the UK. Nevertheless, at the time of their arrival, it was thought important that they consider acquiring British citizenship at some point in the future. We asked at this point therefore if they were going through this process. We also asked if they had family remaining in the Congo and if becoming a British citizen was linked with achieving family reunion.

#### Rights and citizenship: Refugee experiences

Only three of our interviewees had actually applied for British citizenship but one person was going for his ceremony that week.

The rest had not applied primarily because of the cost involved, and almost all our interviewees spoke of a feeling of injustice about the system. At the time of writing, the cost of UK citizenship is £906 per adult, and a child's citizenship costs £669. The fee for the citizenship ceremony is £80 per adult. Given current benefit levels, the generally low wages earned by many of the families and the generally larger size of many refugee families, then the overall cost for a family would be completely prohibitive.

As the refugees have the right to remain in the UK, they are able to apply for Convention Travel Documents, under the UN Convention. These cost £69 for an adult and £46 for a child under 16. However, the documents for a child expire after five years and if there are several children in a family, this can be expensive. The cost for an adult is close to the weekly Job Seeker's Allowance.

*We are trying to save up, but income isn't good, so we end up using the money for something else (4).*

*I would like to apply and was looking at test, costs a lot of money. The government brought us here – why don't they give us that? It is too expensive – can't afford it (10).*

*(We) just got information about it from Ethnic Minority Law Centre. They are very helpful. The money is a big problem – too difficult. The British citizenship is most expensive - £850, and £550 for children if they are not born here. For our friends in Australia it is around 250 dollars, and in Canada and the US it is less than here. Even for the exam, it is £50 each time (16).*

*They should reduce the cost of citizenship. Why should we have to pay all that money when we were taken as refugees? In Australia, you can be a citizen after three years, and citizenship is free ... We only found out when friends went to apply ... The travel document is already finished for our children, as it only last five years for them, and we cannot afford to renew it (19).*

The resentment was fuelled in part by the awareness that a British passport would be essential for foreign travel, as the Convention Travel Documents were not always recognised in parts of Africa. So the high cost was seen as being an unnecessary burden for the families, who felt they had been led to believe that obtaining citizenship would be much more straightforward.

*I want to apply for it. I want to go home and see my family. My mother is dying – I want to see her before she dies. I cannot travel to Congo with just travel document. The problem is not this side, it is problem with African travel side. Last time I went to visit my husband – he was sick, he died in refugee camp – I went through Zambia. They thought I was Rwandan. I was very frightened they would kill me. Need British passport – travel document not enough (11).*

This need to travel back to Africa reflects the fact that every refugee family we interviewed still has relatives and friends there and so family reunion is a major concern. Almost everybody was in regular contact with their relatives, although contact was not always possible by telephone and it was very expensive. Some families used Skype or Facebook.

*(I) really want to keep in touch, but it is so expensive to use mobile – a five pound card only lasts a couple of minutes or so. Very worried about mum, who is ill and cannot afford to pay for proper treatment or medicine (5).*

*We keep in touch ... my family needs financial help – they do not have enough money. My mother is 64, she is ill. She needs a blood transfusion, but there is no money to pay for it. I want to send money, but I cannot. She has been accepted to come to the UK, but I have no money for my mum to come and join me (7).*

Cost was raised frequently as the main barrier to family reunion. Many of the Motherwell refugees had met with the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre to discuss family reunion and in some cases, relatives had received permission to travel to the UK. But the cost of visas and flights was prohibitive.

In addition, some British officials in Lusaka, the Zambian capital, were thought to be unhelpful.

*We sent papers to London – to the British Embassy – two years ago. My sister went to Lusaka and got a passport, but no use. I was told a person has to have thousands in their account. It took eight hours to get to Lusaka and then the same time back to the Congo. What can I do again? (19).*

One family talked of how they had initially been told that they could apply to bring their family to the UK, and the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre had been helpful in processing their application and organising documentation. These documents had then been posted to their relatives in the refugee camps and they had then taken them to the British Embassy in Lusaka, a two day journey by bus. They received their passports but had insufficient savings for additional visas and for their flights. They therefore had to spend a further two days travelling back to the camp, where they remained. The process had been an ordeal for them and they are no nearer coming to the UK.

### Rights and citizenship: Summary

At the time of our 2008 research, many refugees were thinking of applying for British citizenship once they had been settled in the UK for five years. In the interim, they were seeking to obtain Travel Documents which should be internationally accepted and which would allow them to travel freely. It was recognised, however, that few people had proof of identity, birth certificates and the like, as these were lost in the flight from the Congo, so the process of obtaining documentation was time-consuming and potentially frustrating.

It seems that there is now a significant level of disillusionment about the whole citizenship process. The Travel Documents, while useful, have not always been recognised in Africa and, in any case, require regular renewal. The high cost of obtaining citizenship is prohibitive and was thought by many refugees as comparing unfavourably with the position in other countries.

At the same time, the inability to see relatives and friends in the Congo or in Zambia, (particularly elderly parents) is very distressing but family reunion is proving similarly expensive. We saw earlier how many refugees are not in well-paid jobs and are often working in insecure or part-time employment, so it is unclear how many of the families could possibly pay either for citizenship or for their relatives to join them in the UK.

## Conclusion

The refugee experience in Motherwell has been quite mixed. Although almost all the men have worked since their arrival, only a small minority have secured long-term employment and many people have experienced periods of unemployment and low wages. The position of women is quite problematic as many wanted to work but felt unable to do so, often because of inadequate childcare facilities.

Housing provision was generally good and the refugee families had security of tenure, but overcrowding was becoming a serious problem. Some families had good neighbours, although there were also instances of serious neighbour disputes. In a number of cases, this had developed into racist incidents and all the refugees had some experience of racism, ranging from verbal abuse to serious physical assaults. Many did not, however, report it.

In terms of other services, education was highly valued but both adults and children felt that they were insufficiently 'stretched' and their abilities were often underestimated. This was evident at school (in terms of exams such as Highers) and in ESOL courses. Women in particular were having a poor experience of the ESOL courses. Health services appeared to be generally working well and there had been a reduced use of social work services.

A particular concern for all families was the high cost of obtaining British citizenship and the cost of family reunion. Many refugees felt that they had been misled and had been led to believe that these processes would be much simpler than they were now proving to be.

## CHAPTER SIX: LOOKING TO THE LONGER TERM

### Introduction

Our original evaluation of the Gateway Programme in Motherwell (Sim and Gow 2008) was primarily summative in that we were seeking to establish how successful the local authority and its partner agencies had been in integrating the Congolese refugees into the town, and the extent to which the refugee families were 'settling in'. The evaluation was also developmental in that we also reported on a range of wider issues raised by the refugees, many of which were of ongoing concern to them.

There was a great deal of praise for the support which the families had received and Motherwell was seen as being friendly and welcoming. This initial reaction of delight and gratitude is characteristic of other Gateway programmes in other parts of the UK (Evans and Murray 2009). But the refugees were concerned about finding employment, about negotiating 'the system', particularly in relation to welfare benefits and about their family finances.

Interviewees were asked if they anticipated staying in Motherwell. Most felt that they would and Motherwell was sometimes seen positively as 'nice and peaceful', 'quiet' or even 'beautiful' – although some refugees raised concerns about people drinking or taking drugs, and about anti-social behaviour which they had witnessed. In 2008, it was in any case difficult for refugees to know what the future held, or where they might get employment; one family had already moved to take up an offer of employment in Birmingham. A few younger adults thought they would prefer to live in a city such as Glasgow or Edinburgh, for the activities, educational opportunities and for the shops.

In our current research, therefore, we took the opportunity to ask the families to identify positive and negative things about living in Motherwell, six years on, and if they still believed that they would remain there.

### Living in Motherwell

We asked individuals to name three positive things about living in Motherwell and there was surprising unanimity about the things which the refugees valued. First and foremost, they believed that Motherwell was a relatively peaceful place and in talking about 'peace', they sometimes meant that they valued being in a peaceful country, in comparison with the conflict in the Congo. They also believed that, despite racist incidents, people in Motherwell were generally friendly.

*Peace in this area. I trust my neighbours. One day I went out and left my key in the front door – my neighbour took it out and gave me it when I got back. If they are cutting the grass, they will cut my grass too. The neighbour on this side gave my daughter a lift to hospital in Glasgow (3).*

The other things that were highly valued were the availability of education and the fact that it was free, from school through to university, the health service, the quality of housing, and the good transport links in and around the town. Two people spoke of getting to know local Scottish culture as this was presumably seen as a route to integration and one person mentioned the existence of welfare benefits.

The employment situation proved to be quite contentious. Several people spoke of the job scene in negative terms, as they had been unsuccessful in obtaining an appropriate job and one person felt that, in a relatively small town like Motherwell, jobs were sometimes given to applicants who were 'known'. On the other hand, those refugees who had been successful in obtaining employment were more positive.

*(There's) an opportunity to do different jobs. In Africa, we struggle to get a job – here we can go to agency to get something(12).*

Almost all interviewees felt that one of the negative aspects of living in Motherwell was the weather. Other negative things were a lack of adult training and education (and we have already referred to problems with some English language and other courses), racist incidents – and a lack of understanding on the part of some Motherwell residents as to why the refugees were there, and difficulties in making sense of the welfare benefits system.

A number of people spoke of seeing drunkenness and drug taking and how this led to anti-social behaviour, which they often found distressing. They also commented on the nature of a local society which appeared to tolerate it.

*A lot of people have drug addiction – I can see that by how they look. And people smoking. I didn't see that when I was young. Two little boys came down when we were playing football. (They were) taking drugs – I can smell it. I worry about children (4).*

Taking into account both the good and bad things about living in Motherwell, 14 of the 30 individuals who participated in the interviews stated that their overall experience had been positive. A further 15 stated that there were 'some good and some bad' things about their lives and so were reluctant to give a definitive answer. Only one person felt negatively about his experiences and this was because he felt that the refugee community in Motherwell was too small. He felt that they were relatively isolated compared to a larger city and stated that there should be 'more black people' in the town.

*It is hard to answer. There are two sides. Social mobility is not good – we are not all the same. People need help to realise their potential. Some people come to me for help with literacy or numeracy. I try to help. The potential of people is not being used to the full (7).*

*I love Motherwell – no noise, peaceful, this is a quiet area (11).*

*I am happy all the time and thank God for bringing me and my children here... safe. In Africa, life was not good (23).*

## Remaining in Motherwell

We asked our 17 household interviewees if they intended to stay in Motherwell and 11 of them stated that they planned to do so. In the main, there appeared to be a desire to be 'settled' and to feel established.

*It is important for us to be settled. We don't want to move about any more (22).*

*I like to be settled and stable – a place just for living (4).*

And, in part, a feeling of being 'settled' was related quite simply to the length of time they had already lived in the area. This echoes the experiences of asylum seekers in Glasgow and other cities who often stayed in their dispersal areas because they had waited so long for a decision on their refugee status that they felt they had started to put down roots (Carter and El-Hassan 2003, Sim 2009).

*We have been here for six years, without a problem in this area (8).*

Being settled was related to having a job and, in particular, to their children's education in local schools. There was an understandable reluctance to move and to disrupt their education.

*At the moment, because of children at school. When they are grown up we want to see how they feel (7).*

And the presence of relatives and friends in Motherwell was important. A family who had moved from Hull had done so because they had more relatives in Motherwell, which they believed was a 'closer community' than Hull.

Five households were unsure about their future and thought that they might move at some point. Again children were an important factor in the potential decision. It was recognised that, once they were adults, children might move away for personal, educational or employment reasons and this might cause other family members to move away, either with them or subsequently.

Interestingly, one interviewee thought that he might move in order to make use of his experiences as a refugee:

*I have learned Scottish culture and UK culture. If successful in education, (I) will probably move elsewhere, and (I) can talk about my experience. I might move to try different things, try somewhere different. I would like chance to work with the U.N. I have experience of Congo, Africa, experience of camp, experience of feeling at home, experience of feeling like refugee, experience of being in different cultures (12).*

And one family thought that they would benefit from moving to a larger city, with a larger black population.

*Motherwell is not long term. We need a place where there are more black people – like Glasgow. England is too expensive (19).*

Only one interviewee stated definitely that they wished to move from Motherwell and this was related to a perceived lack of opportunities:

*I like Motherwell – it is a nice place. I feel comfortable and safe, but I need to improve my life (3).*

## Summary

While refugees clearly saw Motherwell as a friendly place, in which most of them were likely to stay, some issues remain.

Motherwell was viewed as a relatively peaceful place and refugees were able to contrast the stability of their present lives with their previous experiences in Africa. They valued many aspects of living in the town, particularly the people who they thought generally were friendly, and the local schools and other public services. These positive aspects of life in the town appear to be encouraging most refugees to stay, with children's education being particularly important to them. There were also negative aspects to living in Motherwell, which we have described above.

The longer term is more uncertain. As children grow up and seek new opportunities, this will have an impact on long-term settlement. On the other hand, there may be movement into Motherwell. We have already noted that individuals from Hull have moved there and if family reunion occurs at some point, this will lead to an increase in the size of the Congolese community and give it more of a critical mass than is the case at present. It is, of course, also possible that North Lanarkshire Council may decide to accept a further group of refugees.

As noted by some of our interviewees, the black population of Motherwell is small relative to large cities like Glasgow. An increase in the size of the black population may increase its long-term stability.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS: MEASURING THE FINDINGS AGAINST THE HUMANKIND INDEX

In summarising the findings of this research, we have chosen to measure them against the Oxfam Humankind Index, which seeks to assess Scotland's prosperity and wellbeing. We do this in part because the research has been funded by the UWS-Oxfam Partnership. But we do it because the Index is an attempt to assess wellbeing in the country by going beyond the usual measures of economic growth and increased consumption and by considering more holistic and representative measures of progress (Oxfam 2012). Thus:

*The Oxfam Humankind Index goes beyond the narrow conception of wealth counted by Gross Domestic Product. Instead it focuses on the quality and distribution of growth, utilising and enhancing the assets of communities and the value of individuals to promote social and environmental sustainability. Construction of the Oxfam Humankind Index is about an economy that serves the people, not the other way round (Oxfam 2012: 6)*

The development of the Humankind Index was a highly participative and inclusive exercise in which Oxfam consulted with a range of communities and groups across Scotland. The Index therefore focuses on 'the things that really matter' to the people of Scotland.

Similar measures have been used elsewhere, for example, by researchers like Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) who sought to measure the success of countries in terms of equality, wellbeing, community life and social relations. As is now well known, they found that more equal societies were generally more successful; the UK was a very unequal society.

The Oxfam Humankind Index contains 18 'subdomains' and we discuss our findings under each one.

### **1. An affordable, decent and safe home.**

The key factors used in the Humankind Index are the affordability of rent or mortgage, having security of tenure, having a house in a decent state of repair, having adequate space, being safe and without noise and disturbance from neighbours. Certainly, all the Motherwell refugees are housed in the social rented sector with a Scottish Secure Tenancy so they have security of tenure and the properties are generally well maintained. However, many families have grown during the last six years and overcrowding is a serious problem for some households. A small number are housed in high-rise flats, which are widely accepted as unsuitable for those with children.

Affordability was specifically mentioned as an issue for one family, but many are struggling generally, and it is not known how much housing costs contribute to those difficulties. Given that overcrowding is a problem for many families, and not under-occupancy, the Bedroom Tax is not an issue for this group. The one person for whom it could have been so as her children have now grown up and moved out of the original family home is a pensioner, and so not affected either.

In terms of safety, while many refugees were happy with where they lived now, and some had positive relationships with their neighbours, several more were subjected to ongoing racist behaviour from neighbours or other members of the local community, during which their home had been targeted.

### **2. Physical and mental health**

#### **Physical health**

Most of those interviewed did not report current physical health problems. However, there were exceptions – one person now had a chronic mobility problem as a result of slipping in the snow, and two participants were on long-term sickness-related benefits, one of them as a result of injuries he had received before coming to Scotland. One woman was also supporting her school-age daughter who attended hospital outpatients for an ongoing leg problem.

Of those who had had physical health problems at some point since they came, all reported being satisfied with how that had been treated, and with the level of health service support generally. However, there had been problems with communication at times, with one woman reporting that she had had to be very assertive and persistent in order to communicate the seriousness of a health issue she had been experiencing and thus avert potentially serious consequences. The mother of the aforementioned young girl, expressed a concern about the possibility that lack of adequate information at the time of her daughter's accidental injury to her leg, may have affected her ability to know how to care for her adequately at the time.

## Mental Health

At the time of our previous research six years ago, concerns around mental health were raised by professionals involved with the refugees but we are unsure of the extent to which it remains an issue. However, in addition to the potential aftermath of trauma experienced before arriving in this country, the stress and evident distress of those who were still separated from their family and their sense of powerlessness to affect change, clearly affected those in that situation, and it would be surprising if this did not impact directly on their mental health.

In addition, several women reported feelings of isolation and loneliness and, for some, communication difficulties inevitably compounded their ability to overcome these.

### **3. Living in a neighbourhood where you can enjoy going outside and having a clean and healthy environment**

While some people reported feeling totally safe in their local area, for many more the experience of going outside was often accompanied by the 'everyday' racism of comments like 'Monkey' or 'Go back to the jungle', or of negative body language on buses or in shops.

This inevitably affected the refugees' perception of their environment, but in spite of this, many felt that they liked the area that they lived in, and reported that their children had friends and were able to play in the garden. The vast majority of the houses visited had garden space, and seemed to be in clean and relatively quiet areas, with only two immediate areas having an 'uncared-for' air.

Of those two, both sets of parents reported that their children were not able to play outside, as either they would be actively bullied or because other children would not play with them. For one other family, the children could not play outside because of neighbours continually shouting at them, and so they had to be taken regularly to the park instead. For that family, their front garden had become a local dumping ground for empty soft drink cans and food wrappers

### **4. Having satisfying work to do (whether paid or unpaid)**

Our interviews revealed important gender differences in terms of access to and satisfaction with work. For example, the following interview from one couple was revealing:

*Man: Men manage – women sit like this (sits with arms crossed and sad expression), they don't know what to do. Women need training for jobs.*

*Woman: I went to the Job Centre and they told me I couldn't register, because my husband was working ... so no help to find a job.*

Only one woman was working full-time and was satisfied with her job. Another woman enjoyed her work but it was only for three hours a week, and she needed and wanted more. Of the two other women who were currently involved in work, one worked part-time cleaning in the evenings, which created childcare problems, while the other was involved in voluntary work, but needed and wanted paid work that used her skills.

One woman had worked previously and in a job she enjoyed, but was now retired and had health problems; another was at college part-time, but also really wanted a job. Of the remaining eight women, all were currently full-time mothers, and all actively expressed their desire either to get a job now or in the near future, or to study with the aim of then moving on to a job.

All of the men had worked at some point, with six in work at that point, three currently unemployed (one was about to start work), two suffering from health problems making them unable to work at the moment, and another man in full-time education. Of those working, only two had secure full-time employment: one enjoyed his job, but struggled on the minimum wage and tax credits, while the other – who on the face of it had the best job of the group – dreamt of using his skills and qualifications to work in agriculture, which he loved and missed. Three others were working in low-paid, insecure jobs, which caused them stress and financial struggle:

### **5. Having good relationships with family and friends**

Here we have taken this domain to include the Congolese and wider refugee communities, as well as individual relationships between people. We focus on adult experiences; as we did not set out specifically to interview children, for the most part their experiences are reported through the comments and concerns of their parents, as well as through the eyes of three teenagers, who were included in the family interviews.

### The Congolese Community

It seemed clear that for most the mutual support of the Congolese community was a very important and enriching positive factor in their lives, and perhaps acted to make it possible to continue to function on an everyday basis both at an individual and family level, which would not otherwise be the case. People talked of their friends as 'family' and it was clear that they meant this in a close and deeply felt sense.

There were rituals and contributions to the celebrations of birth and marriage, as well as the community 'moving-in' for three days grieving and support, following a death. It was also clear that people gained mutual support in terms of discussing issues and developing understandings; for example when asked their views about school, one participant responded:

*Happy, no problems ... good school and new headteacher. Four Congolese families there ... we need to be together to know what each is thinking.*

### Wider African Community

Several people voiced the importance of being in contact with, and of recognising the common bond between their and some other African communities, and saw this as a potential source of strength and mutual support and wanted more opportunities to come together. A number were in contact with other African communities in Glasgow.

*Need more black people (in Motherwell). It is strange, when we were in Forgewood ... in 2009 ... there were more black people – from Nigeria, Namibia, Tanzania and others. They are not there now. Why?*

### Church Communities

For many, both women and men, their church community was also extremely important. As well as providing a sense of meaning, belonging and consistency, it was also a chance to fulfil important roles, for example as pastor, member of the choir or working in the church café, with the fostering of confidence and potential development of skills that can bring. For some it also brought important and valued friendships outwith the Congolese community:

*(We) have married couple who have become good friends.*

And another, while pointing to a large framed picture in pride of place on their living room wall:

*They were volunteers from the church, but now they are our friends for life.*

These three communities of 'family', church and friends – 'nested' within each other – seemed to serve to support and nurture crucial capabilities for inclusion, participation, and support within and from their members in ways, which often seem blocked within the wider community – although, as always, there are exceptions.

## 6. Feeling that you and those you care about are safe

For people who have come to a new country fleeing war and trauma, the meaning of 'safe' can have several variations. When asked if they felt 'safe' in Motherwell, some spoke of being safe from war, but others voiced a distinction:

*OK, there is no problem of pushing the door in and people coming to kill us, but it is hard work ... something needs to be done...*

For even those who reported feeling safe, many had experienced 'casual' everyday racism, with some also naming at least one incident which caused them significant distress.

There were very broadly two different groups in terms of how they described or thought about this (although there were some overlaps).

The first tried to ignore it and concentrate on the positive – 'There are good and bad everywhere'. They tended generally to be those who had not experienced the most severe incidents, and they seemed to regard each incident as separate and resulting from the actions and ignorance of individuals.

The second group voiced principled expectations of being treated as equals, and expressed higher levels of unhappiness and a sense of awareness of injustice. They tended to see incidents as connected and cultural and an endemic type of response. Several people commented on gender and age differences in terms of their experience and thus the perceived likelihood of people they encounter behaving in a racist way – with older women very much seen as the least likely, and working-age adult men the most problematic.

*Older women, from about forty were good – 80% good; young women, about 18-25 or 27 look like good (no problems usually). Adult men over 30-35 ... the problem.*

However, while individual women on their own seemed less likely to be overtly racist in the street, there were several incidents from women and children together, directed at other women and children who were out together. Children's racist behaviour, mostly directed at other children and women was reported by several of those interviewed, often causing visible distress when talking about it. Sometimes the children were alone, at other times with adults – sometimes clearly mirroring their actions:

*I was shouted at ... 'Manky f \_\_\_\_g bastard' by someone who was drunk and I had to run away. They had a little girl with them too and she shouted 'manky'.*

However, there were other times when children on their own were directly involved.

From one father, who had experienced a serious physical assault in his area:

*Even before this, my kids can't play outside. My kids have no freedom. The small park across the road, the youngest can't go there. He came back crying ... just a few weeks ago ... other children hit them and poured water over them. Things were happening before, but worse since ... We have to take them to another park, so if I am at work, they can't go out to play. The children make remarks to them 'black bastards', and also to me in the street, they shout and swear racist names.'*

One young person from the same family commented:

*When we first came, not bad. (Now), swearing from kids – shouting names and throwing stones ... young kids – it happens regularly. I am frightened. I feel not safe. I try to speak to them. Some go to same school as my brothers – they hit them when they are coming off the bus.*

When asked about whether she would like to continue living in the area:

*I hope we can be safe more than this ... but I don't think about leaving Motherwell. I want same school, same friends...*

For men, there were particular problems on the street at times, with one young man finding his own way of dealing with it, after he had suffered a violent racist assault:

*I learned about the culture, changed my behaviour, became more awake. I walk very brutal now. (illustrates swagger). I walked past a group of seven kids. I didn't walk around them, I walk through them, have to show I am not intimidated ... They were saying 'black bastard', 'If you want it, you can get it' One said 'Man, don't mind him, he's drunk'. I have learned how to walk, how to behave.*

However, for most of the men interviewed, adaptation consisted of learning how to be more reserved:

*I don't go into other people's problems – that's when you become unsafe. I try to respect and not annoy people – try to be nice to people and people are nice – say hello.*

For our group, therefore, feeling 'safe', has many facets, and depends on what is meant by 'safe', their particular experiences since coming to Motherwell, and their differing ways of coping with racism – individually, and as a result of gendered and perhaps other group experience.

### **7. Access to green and wild spaces, community spaces and play areas**

In the present survey, it was clear that those with gardens valued them highly, particularly as spaces where their children could play safely, with those families in flats asking for homes with gardens. In terms of community spaces, several families reported making use of and appreciating local amenities, such as the football pitch, and swimming pool, with one also appreciating the proximity to Strathclyde Park. In our previous survey, the refugees spoke of the wider Lanarkshire area as being attractive.

However it is clear that racist behaviour from the wider community at times made it difficult to fully develop a sense of entitlement and ownership of their community spaces for the group.

### **8. Secure work and suitable work**

This overlaps with the domain on undertaking satisfying work. It is concerned with the availability of jobs, job security, having jobs which match individuals' skills and aspirations, the availability of employment or training for low-skilled groups, employment protection, and the provision of appropriate and affordable childcare.

It is fair to say that only one or two members of the group had work that could be deemed to be both secure and suitable, and a number of refugees felt that their skills were not being fully utilised. For example, one of the men who had secure work had skills and qualifications in agriculture that were not being used, which was a source of disappointment for him.

Only one of the women claimed to have secure and suitable work, and while some were in a position to take employment now if it were available, for others, returning to work was something they were eager to do as soon as possible, for example, when their child started nursery. Women expressed a strong desire to work and / or study, as a means of fulfilling personal ambitions, to show an example to their children, and to take an active part in society.

### **9. Having enough money to pay the bills and buy what you need**

Almost everyone reported struggling financially, with some unable to cover even necessities:

*We have not enough money to get through the week – no savings, no food – bills ... No money for emergencies. What can we do, where can we go?*

*Even working full-time and tax credits – not enough to live on, and we moved and paid for moving, transport, children's clothes...*

*I work 32 hours, minimum wage. I have no housing benefit, just tax credits. We have to struggle ... paying bills is hard.*

While these problems are widespread in the society in which we all live, the participants had a sense of bewilderment as to why this was allowed to happen and about the unfairness of not being able to do anything about it. It was reflective of their collective belief in having been promised (and expected) more, and the intrinsic 'wrongness' of people being forced to live like that, when they were willing and trying to work hard and provide role models for their children.

Low income was particularly problematic when seeking to obtain British citizenship, as they simply could not afford to apply for it. All wanted to do this, but they felt they had been abandoned, after their expectations had previously been raised.

*I have passed the exam. It is impossible to put money by.*

There was a strong feeling of injustice and, for some, a feeling they had been misled. They believed that they had been promised this opportunity, but were actually being denied the means to exercise it, through no fault of their own.

However, on the rare occasion it was possible, it was the man who came first:

*Husband: I am going for my ceremony on Wednesday!*

*Wife: I passed my exam, but cannot afford it too.*

## 10. Having a secure source of money

As stated above, the jobs undertaken by many of the refugees did not provide a secure source of money. Many of the men had been in and out of insecure, low-paid, often agency-based work since arriving in Motherwell, and as well as the problems of insecurity of wages, this also brought huge problems in terms of shifting on and off various benefits, coupled with inevitable delays and confusion.

For example, one man was doing agency work and thought if that was under 16 hours it was possible to do so while on Job Seekers Allowance. He was 'pulled in' by the Jobcentre, and then had to repay it, which caused substantial hardship. He was unaware that if he worked a few hours to help support his family that his earnings would be reclaimed. He felt that this was wrong.

For another, a delay in re-establishing housing benefit caused stress and other problems:

*I had to go to court (around 2011). I claimed JSA and Housing Benefit, but it took long time to be paid. The housing association sent me to court for rent arrears ... The money had already come a week before, but they did not tell us. I am not happy ... I have a bad debt record now and it was not my fault.*

Of those unable to work due to health problems, one had had his disability benefit withdrawn and was waiting for an appeal and one needed advice about getting the right benefits.

For those women whose English was poorer, there were potentially other problems too, and one woman, whose partner was a full-time student, had had her benefit sanctioned:

*The Job Centre sent me to the place where you learn how to get jobs. I couldn't speak English, so I returned home. They sent me again to another place. I had to take my baby – I had no-one to look after her. They sent me away. The Job Centre stopped my benefit, given appointment for next Thursday – no money now for about one month.*

## 11. Access to arts, hobbies and leisure activities

The participants were not directly asked about this, although some information may be obtained from responses. Many of the women talked about feeling isolated, and most had considerable child care commitments; however several mentioned that they had previously enjoyed classes at the Community Centre on sewing, cooking and hairdressing. It is notable however, that these are considered 'typical' female activities, and it is not known to what extent the choice of these was dictated by the participants themselves. Several women were involved in church activities, with singing in the choir particularly important.

The lack of informal spaces for women to get together with their children was mentioned more than once – in a way that highlighted the importance of women coming together to eat and talk together as women (and perhaps as mothers also).

*We talk more when we are together, learn from each other. Here, women are in the house with children. Where your kids are, you have to be there ... In Congo and in camp – children are together. If you have something, talk ... women come together, eat together, look after each other's kids.*

Similarly, many women expressed an interest in finding out more about an African women's group.

For the men, some were involved in playing football, and some younger members of the community had developed a local sports and youth group, that met regularly. Some of the men also mentioned spending time with other men from the Congolese community in town (with some arrangements being made during the interviews). Some also talked of meeting up occasionally, for a drink maybe, with men from the wider community. However, for one man, smoking was a problematic barrier that stopped him pursuing this in the way that he would like. Indeed, many of those mentioned expressed concerns about smoking and drug taking in the area generally, and it is not known to what extent that constrains their ability to engage in public leisure activities.

No other specific hobbies or leisure interests were referred to, apart from television and computers. It seemed obvious that almost everyone spent a lot of time watching television and all of the homes had a large TV in a prominent position. Several had it on when the interviewer arrived (and had to be asked if it were possible to switch it off at times as it was very intrusive), and several mentioned various aspects of the importance of TV during our interviews – for example in learning colloquial English.

Some homes had a computer, while others had to rely on going to the library for that purpose. It was overwhelmingly the men of the households who seemed to use this; for example, when an email address was given for any purpose, the man was always forthcoming with one, while women – with two exceptions – did not seem to have one.

### **12. Having the facilities you need locally**

Most people spoke highly of Motherwell as an area as having all the general facilities they needed on a day to day basis, although one young woman bemoaned the lack of some facilities for teenagers, having to go to Glasgow, for example to ice skate.

However, the lack of a support network and source of practical advice for both the Congolese and wider African communities was an issue for some, as, again, was the lack of a dedicated space for women to meet.

### **13. Getting enough skills and education to live a good life**

This was a major issue for almost everyone. While a small number were at college and progressing with their choice of course, many more expressed unhappiness at their lack of educational progress and confusion about how to resolve it. For some of the women in particular, lack of good English skills was an additional barrier to progress and to their involvement in the wider community.

There was a great demand for educational advice – both as a means of self-improvement and a route to better work prospects. While some had managed to negotiate the educational maze, most people did not understand how to get from where they were to where they wanted to be, or whether it was even possible to do so. Many therefore wanted to know how they could improve their education and prospects, and also how to build on pre-existing skills (for example to be a community worker, teacher, nurse, or to work in agriculture), to get qualified and have a career in the area. Many participants were emotional when talking about this, with feelings of disappointment and powerlessness.

A practical outcome of this research may be demonstrated by the fact that, following requests from the refugees, the Lifelong Learning Academy of the University of the West of Scotland entered into a collaboration with North Lanarkshire Council to provide educational advice and support to the refugee community in Motherwell.

Of those (both women and men), who felt that their English needed improvement, many emphasised the need for full-time English classes, saying that part-time learning was insufficiently challenging. Some compared provision unfavourably with that experienced by other refugees who had gone to the Nordic countries:

*We have friends in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. When people are re-settled there, they are sent to school for three years, and then onto a work placement.*

A number of refugees had attended Motherwell College but many were quite critical of it. While some did find it very helpful and supportive, a larger number expressed dissatisfaction. There was a feeling that the Congolese students had been treated as a homogenous group with insufficient thought given to individual student needs.

One former student felt that some staff continually fell back to asking members of the Congolese community to continue to study English. Two others suggested that some staff did not seem to appreciate that having an African accent did not mean that students were unable to understand or speak and write English well.

But there were also other comments about positive attitudes from academic staff, so the picture is not entirely straightforward.

In more general terms overall, there was a view expressed by both adults and schoolchildren that the refugees were not being sufficiently challenged intellectually and some spoke of being much more capable than they were sometimes given credit for.

#### 14. Being part of a community

This was seen as vitally important to people. As already mentioned, all of the group saw themselves as part of a Congolese community within the area, with some also specifically identifying as part of a wider African community. Many also saw themselves as part of the dispersed Congolese community within the UK and, for the majority, their church community was very important too. Some also did report feeling a full part of the wider Motherwell community.

Many, however, expressed sadness that their expectations and desire for fuller community integration and involvement had not been met. As well as issues around racism, several talked about the lack of trust and openness that they felt overall that people in Motherwell (and the wider UK) had around each other, and were concerned about levels of violence and addiction that they observed all around them.

Several commented on the differences between their cultural expectations, and what they perceived those of the host community to be, and their desire to break down those barriers. However, as previously mentioned, the difficulties in doing so, had resulted – for some – in a withdrawal from public openness and a wariness when going about their public business.

Others reported good relationships with their neighbours, and that they were very happy in their geographical community. Where racism had been encountered, they had tried to ignore it on the basis that ‘There is good and bad everywhere’.

#### 15. Having good transport to get where you need to go

The transport links in Motherwell were well regarded by everyone. However, for those on low income, ‘availability’ must also include affordability. Many refugees were struggling on low income, and so it is reasonable to suppose that transport costs may also be an issue for at least some.

#### 16. Being able to access high quality services

All of the group reported being able to access, and having used a range of services, often with positive results – particularly in terms of health and education. Many had also used some form of advice service, such as the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre, the Scottish Refugee Council and the Red Cross and had generally found them helpful (and at times were very complimentary about them). But refugees often struggled to understand local bureaucracies and this sometimes prevented them from accessing the help they needed.

*Finding help and advice is a problem ... especially trying to find the right person to help in a situation. If you can find the right person ... that is the problem.*

Just being approached by the research team resulted in a clearly expressed and widespread need for advice on a range of issues, often taking the form of spontaneously directing requests for advice and information to the interviewer – with education being the most frequently voiced topic, followed by women’s opportunities generally. For example,

*...need opportunities to study, because education affects our lives ... need opportunities for apprenticeships for young people. We need information, don't know where to find out, how to go about it. School and local council should help us – we need information.*

As far as the local authority was concerned, people were generally happy with the services provided by North Lanarkshire Council, with perhaps the only problem being that they needed more information on what services were available and how to access them. The local Job Centre was viewed less positively and two refugees discussed individually reporting details of workplace racism to Job Centre staff when re-registering for work. They felt, however, that they had not been given advice as to further courses of action, nor, as far as they were aware, were any recordings taken of the incidents or details of the employers involved.

There was also some evidence of potentially discriminatory behaviour towards some women from the refugee community:

*I went to the Job Centre and they told me I couldn't register, because my husband was working ... so no help to find a job.*

Several participants also reported difficulties understanding letters from the Job Centre, and that they had fallen foul of rules that they didn’t know existed at various times – for example when securing a few hours’ work.

## **17. Human rights, freedom from discrimination, acceptance and respect**

It is suggested that comments under this heading would potentially benefit from a Human Rights Framework analysis; given space constraints and the intention to be comprehensive, this is in the process of development with the intent of publishing it as a separate piece of work in its own right. Therefore, at present, we have confined our specific comments here to the issues of discrimination, acceptance and respect.

In general, from the responses, it is clear that, while living in Motherwell, the participants have had a multi-layered and sometimes contradictory experience. While there are those who report feeling accepted within the host community overall, they may also report an everyday and casual racism which they have been required to ignore or to which they have had to adjust their own behaviour to accommodate.

For others, it is more obvious, and they clearly state that they are aware of endemic and systematic discrimination and lack of acceptance and respect on an ongoing basis, and often display a high level of insight into why some of these attitudes and behaviours exist and persist.

Against this background, there were also many who reported positive relationships with neighbours and the wider community, as well as some who had developed good friendships through their local church or workplace, but for the majority, this still did not mean being fully accepted and feeling respected overall.

Of course, it is difficult to know how widespread and entrenched these discriminatory attitudes are within the host community, although there is a belief among the group that age and gender factors are relevant to a certain extent. Previous research in the field of integration has acknowledged a gap in terms of specific host community attitudes and beliefs about refugees (Phillimore and Goodson 2006), and this is picked up later in the recommendations of this report.

In terms of facilitating refugee integration (Ager and Strang 2004), local agencies remained committed to this and there was little evidence of any systematic active discrimination in this area. Indeed the majority reported positive relationships and experiences with, for example, G.P.s, teachers and social workers.

However, there could be argued to be some evidence of a structural gap – a lack of awareness of cultural difference and associated needs – particularly around communication difficulties and a need for one-to-one support and advice when navigating the complex systems particularly around education, work and the welfare system. This was reflected in the large number of requests for advice and information directed at the interviewer during the study.

It was also felt by some participants that the early (and much appreciated) efforts of the local council and other agencies had not been sustained in terms of active and ongoing support for equality of opportunity and monitoring for equality of outcome.

*At first, the government was fighting for equality, the council was fighting for equality ... don't see anything happening now. The Job Centre and Council and those places, are all white. Why don't even the people who speak good English get jobs there?*

In terms of additional gender discrimination, it can also be argued that elements of the current service provision, particularly in respect to English language classes, childcare support, career advice, and the need for women-only spaces, are discriminatory in not fully acknowledging a need for follow-up advice, support and research on the particular needs of women within this specific community. Oxfam (2007), for example, highlights the importance of Karibu, the Glasgow-based support organisation for refugee women, established in 2004.

Comment was also made about the recruitment and employment policies of several large employers in the town, with some of the group reporting discriminatory practices, as well feeling the lack of accessible and appropriate remedy for these. In contrast, many saw third-sector agencies such as the local Citizens Advice Bureau, and further afield, the Scottish Refugee Council, the Red Cross and the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre as being helpful, although some refugees were disappointed if they were not able to achieve the outcomes they had hoped for on such matters as family reunion and citizenship applications.

Lastly, one outstanding impression from the refugee group was that they were very conscious of the importance of being respected and treated with dignity, and they expected that was how all people should treat each other. This meant that they felt strongly about the importance of respecting others and wished to have more opportunity to extend the same treatment that they wanted for themselves to those around them. Many spoke regretfully of not being able to be closer to their neighbours and the wider Motherwell community, and clearly stated that they would welcome more opportunities to come together and celebrate their mutual humanity in getting to know and supporting each other.

## 18. Feeling good

There are of course, many dimensions to 'feeling good', some of which depend on what is being asked (and by whom), but the main difficulty when attempting to discuss the findings within this domain is that this specific question was not asked of the study participants.

We do know, however, that there are some factors which make feeling good more likely, including:

- People's optimism, self-esteem and resilience
- Time to spend on activities that make you feel good
- Doing things which give a sense of purpose and are meaningful
- Access to help when not feeling good.

Oxfam (2012) summarises these as essentially 'being happy with who you are'.

Firstly, in terms of self-esteem, we were struck by how many of those interviewed commented on what they felt was 'the right way to be' or to 'behave with others', and how those beliefs seemed founded on firm ideas about human dignity and rights for themselves as well as others. No-one indicated in any way that they felt that they did not deserve to be treated with respect, and there was often a clear impression of the participants' sense of self-esteem, even when faced with the daily challenges that many of them encountered.

Similarly, in terms of what they have had to endure before coming to this country, inevitably it would seem that the adult refugees would have had to be highly resilient people. However, now, six years later, it is not known how that has been affected by the day-to-day issues that affect them in Scotland. Many people talked about a sense of powerlessness and of feeling 'stuck', as well as feeling prevented from exercising their desire to improve their circumstances.

In terms of spending time on activities that make individuals feel good, it is perhaps worth repeating here, that for some, working long and unsocial hours, and for many women, childcare responsibilities, inevitably curtail the time that is potentially available to do this.

In relation to activities which give are meaningful, we have already identified the importance of local churches for the refugees. For some also, education held a sense of purpose, and it was clear that many derived much from their involvement in their own community rituals and gatherings. However, it is not known from the existing study what other sources of purpose and meaningfulness were important to people, and whether or not these were currently present in their lives.

As previously mentioned, members of the Congolese community often provided a source of access to help for those 'not feeling good', as did – for some – other friends and neighbours. However, the clearly expressed needs for advice, information and support from many of those interviewed, suggested potential problems in knowing how to access other forms of support if or when needed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We make the following recommendations, based on the research reported in this study.

### Education and English Language Provision

- Reflecting the clearly expressed need for full-time English language provision, from the study participants, it is recommended that North Lanarkshire Council carry out a dedicated mapping exercise to ascertain the current level of English language skills amongst the individual members of the group.
- The exercise should be designed to take into account the needs of women – as well as any young people outwith mainstream education. Particular effort should also be made to reach those who did not participate in the current study, in recognition that a low level of English language skills may have led to their exclusion.
- Upon completion of the mapping exercise, appropriate resources should be put in place to remedy identified English language needs, with appropriate support provided on an individualised basis where appropriate. Consideration should be given to both mixed and women-only classes, reflecting that refugees are not a homogeneous group, and have different needs and preferences.
- There should be a clear pathway of structured transition from any community-based classes to college-based provision, and on to mainstream qualifications, for those who wish to progress, and are able to benefit from it.
- A named Refugee Education Liaison Worker should be appointed where this is not already in place, with a pro-active and student-facing role. Consideration should be given to examining ways in which this could link into general accessible, community-based Educational Guidance, with a particular focus on inclusion, integration and challenging cultural, racial and gender stereotypes.
- Research should be carried out both on the current position and anticipated destinations for teenagers and young people within the refugee group, including current and existing qualifications, pupil / student experience, and well-being and gender-related issues. Relevant information and advice needs should be identified for young people and parents, e.g. alternative routes to higher education, apprenticeships, volunteering and work-experience placements.
- Pro-active support should be given to the refugee group to facilitate greater parental involvement in schools, where parents desire this.
- Building on the skills of those with prior experience and involvement in the RITES programme, positive action opportunities should be identified to offer Teaching Assistant training and placements where possible – to aid integration and break down barriers, encourage the sharing of cultures and experiences, and provide positive role models for children and young people.
- Motherwell College (now New College Lanarkshire) should consider the student feedback in this report, investigate, and take appropriate action as deemed fit. It is recommended that staff be made aware of the student feedback, and that student bodies and class representatives be included in any follow-on awareness-raising or further training.

### Housing

- There should be recognition of potential stress points, with the potential for creating racist incidents, when allocating housing, for example placing families with children in high-rise flats, and positive action should be taken in anticipating and avoiding these where possible.
- Information should be provided with a view to raising awareness of mutual exchange schemes among the group, particularly those who are overcrowded.
- North Lanarkshire Council's provision of secure tenancies for all Gateway refugee families, together with the high level of initial support given, should be highlighted as examples of good practice. However, this report has also identified a need for ongoing support.

## Community Integration

- A locally based Befriending Scheme should be developed, as has occurred in Ireland, with agencies identifying, recruiting and training volunteers from the wider host community, and matching them with those refugees who feel they would benefit from that support.
- Further consideration should be given to the most appropriate form of group support, i.e. how to develop a more representative community organisation that has the support of those who would wish to join a group.
- Those members of the refugee community who are interested should be given the opportunity to volunteer and train in welfare rights and general advice and information work, within the relevant SVQ framework where possible. Particular attention should be given to recruiting interested women and young people, with appropriate support for involvement.
- The possibility of linking in with Higher Education providers of community work and social work courses should be considered, with a view to hosting and benefiting from student placements within such a project, as an aid to community integration.
- Information on volunteering opportunities generally should be made more widely available to the refugee community, with a pro-active programme of input from potential host organisations, for example North Lanarkshire Council itself.
- As many of the group have prior experience of growing food, levels of interest should be gauged in supporting refugees to participate in community garden / allotment projects.
- In terms of gender issues, further research is needed on identifying the level of differing experiences of women and men.
- There is a clearly identified need for a women's support group, both for social and emotional support, and for advice on practical issues, such as equality, childcare provision, benefits advice, etc. More work is also needed in linking women into existing mainstream services for women and raising awareness of these.

## General

- Future refugee research should have a greater focus on exploring the income levels of refugees, given that a number appeared to be living in straitened circumstances.
- Within Scotland, the use of a Human Rights framework (as suggested in the Scottish National Action Plan on Human Rights) should be considered as appropriate for future refugee research.
- Refresher training in anti-discrimination practice and equal opportunities for various agencies within the host community would be appropriate.

## Gateway Protection Programme

- The Gateway Programme should be seen as a process aiming towards full citizenship and so refugees should be helped to achieve UK citizenship.
- There needs to be greater assistance given to refugees to help with the process of family reunion.
- Given the small size of the Congolese community in Motherwell, North Lanarkshire Council should participate further in the Gateway Programme, so as to establish a more sustainable community within Lanarkshire.

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## APPENDIX: COPY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

**University of the West of Scotland with the support of North Lanarkshire Partnership**

**Research Project:**

**Long-term integration of Gateway Protection Programme refugees in North Lanarkshire**

Interview Number: .....

### INTRODUCTION

A: Introduce Self

B: Explain research.

In 2008, the University of the West of Scotland undertook research for North Lanarkshire Council into the experiences of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo now living in Motherwell. I understand that you and/or your family participated in that research.

The present study is intended to talk to refugee families, four to five years after arriving here, and to assess how well families are settling down and integrating into Motherwell and if they are experiencing any ongoing problems.

We are hoping to interview all the Congolese households now living in Motherwell and so we would like to interview you individually just now. We hope to hold a meeting of all Congolese families later on to tell you about the results of our work.

C. The option to terminate this interview:

You can choose to stop the interview at any point, or you can decide not to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with.

D. Anonymity:

Your response will be added together with those from other interviewees and used to write a report. It will not be possible to identify individuals from the information given in the report and only the two individuals involved in analysing the questionnaire will see individual answers.

### Section 1: Personal details

Can I ask you a few personal details, about your household and about the time you first came to Motherwell?

1. Name of interviewee .....

2. Name of partner / spouse [if applicable]:

.....

3. Address:

.....

.....

Gender: [PLEASE CIRCLE]

MALE

FEMALE

5. Age: .....

6. Which languages do you speak well? [WRITE IN]

7. What is your partnership or marital status? [PLEASE CIRCLE]

1. Married or with partner
2. Single
3. Widowed
4. Divorced
5. Separated

8. Can you tell me how many people are in your household and who they are? Can you tell us about any children born to you since you arrived? And can you tell us about anyone else who has joined your household (for example, through the Family Reunion process)? [WRITE IN]

9. What did you think of the support that you received when you first arrived in Motherwell? Was it useful? Do you think you got everything you needed at the time? [WRITE IN AND EXPLAIN]

10. How do you feel now? Are there still things which you think you need or need information about? [WRITE IN]

## Section 2: Employment

I would now like to ask you some questions about work.

11. What work did you do when you first came to Motherwell?

[WRITE IN]

12. [IF THEY HAVE A PARTNER]

Did your partner / spouse work?

Yes. [IF YES] – What was his / her job? [WRITE IN]

No [IF NO] – What did he / she do? [e.g. unemployed, bringing up family, in education etc. [WRITE IN]:

13. And are you working now?

1. Yes

[IF YES] – where and what job(s) are you doing?

– Is it secure? And do you enjoy it?

2. No

[IF NO] – What type of work are you looking for or would you like to do?

14. And does your spouse work?

1. Yes

[IF YES] – where and what job(s) is s/he doing?

– Is it secure? And does s/he enjoy it?

2. No

[IF NO] – Is s/he looking for work, and if so, what kind of work?

15. What has been your experience of working here? Have you had any difficulties? [WRITE IN and PROBE for experiences of both interviewee and spouse]

16. Do you feel that you have enough money for your family?

[PROBE and WRITE IN responses from both interviewee and spouse]

**Section 3: Housing**

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about the house you live in.

17. What kind of house is it? For example:

- 1. House with a garden
- 2. Flat
- 3. Other [WRITE IN]: .....

18. How many rooms do you have?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

19. And is your house:

- 1. Rented from North Lanarkshire Council
- 2. Rented from a local housing association
- 3. Rented from a private landlord
- 4. Owned by you
- 5. Family member or friend's home
- 6. Other [WRITE IN].....

20. Is this the same house you lived in when you first arrived in Motherwell?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO

[IF NO], What was your previous address?

.....

And why did you move?

.....

21. Are you happy with your house?

[PROMPT FOR INFORMATION ON WHETHER IT IS THE RIGHT SIZE, IN GOOD REPAIR, ETC: AND WRITE IN]

22. Have your housing needs changed since you moved to Motherwell?

[WRITE IN]

Section 4: Education

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about education.

23. Do you take part in any form of education?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT – PROBE FOR SCHOOL, COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY, COMMUNITY EDUCATION / ESOL etc]

24. If so, what are you studying just now?

[WRITE IN]

25 [If you have children], do / did your children take part in any form of education?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT – SCHOOL, COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY etc]

26. Have you been happy with the school(s) they attend(ed)?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT: PROBE FOR QUALITY OF SCHOOL, DIVERSITY OF SCHOOL, PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT etc]

27. What has been your children's experience of attending school?

[WRITE IN: PROBE FOR FRIENDSHIPS, LEARNING ENGLISH etc]

28. Are you involved in any school activities (Parents Groups etc)?

[WRITE IN]

### Section 5: Use of Services

Now I'd like to ask you about the various services which you may have used.

#### 5a Health

29. Have you made use of health services (doctor / GP, hospital etc.) since living in Motherwell?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

30. Did you get the help that you needed and were you happy with the service you received?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

#### 5b Social Work

31. Have you had any contact with social work services?

[WRITE IN]

32. Did you get the help that you needed and were you happy with the service you received?

[WRITE IN]

#### 5c Police

33. Have you had any contact with the police?

[WRITE IN]

34. Did you get the help that you needed and were you happy with the service you received?

[WRITE IN]

#### 5d Legal services

35. Have you had any contact with a lawyer?

[WRITE IN]

36. Did you get the help that you needed and were you happy with the service you received?

[WRITE IN]

**5e Finally...**

37. Are there any refugee organisations which you have had contact with? Can you comment on the contact you've had? [Organisations might include, for example, Positive Action in Housing, Scottish Refugee Council, Ethnic Minority Law Centre etc.]

[WRITE IN COMMENT. PROMPT FOR INFORMATION ON WHY THEY CONTACTED ORGANISATION, HOW HELPFUL WAS ADVICE etc.]

38. If you need any kind of help or advice, have you got someone you can talk to?

[WRITE IN]

39. And do you feel that you are getting the same access to help and advice as other people in the local area? [WRITE IN]

**Section 6: Social Connections**

I would now like to ask you about the local area, local organisations, and about the other people that you come into contact with. PROBE in this section for any differing responses within the household].

40. Do you feel happy living in this area?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

41. Would you say that this was an area which was friendly and neighbourly, and where people get on well together?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

42. Have you made friends with local people?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

43. Do you feel like part of the community?

[WRITE IN]

44. Have you been able to understand and get used to local customs?

[WRITE IN]

45. Do you feel safe living here?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

46. Have you ever felt threatened here?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

47. Have you ever experienced racism in any way?

[WRITE IN: PROBE FOR DETAILS – WHERE DID IT OCCUR, WERE POLICE INVOLVED ETC]

48. Are you involved with any community groups? Can you tell us about any involvement? [PROBE – SCHOOL, YOUTH OR SPORTS CLUBS, RESIDENTS' GROUPS, CHILDCARE GROUPS etc: WRITE IN DETAILS]

49. Are you involved with any groups specifically dealing with refugees?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

50. Have you been involved in any events or activities organised by the Council's Community Learning and Development Department?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

51. Are you involved with a local faith group or place of worship [church / other / none]?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

52. Do you see other families from Congo who are living in Motherwell fairly regularly? Has it been easy or difficult to keep in touch?

[WRITE IN AND COMMENT]

53. How often and where do you meet?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

54. Do you organise events together?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

55. Are you in contact with any other refugee groups in Scotland?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

### Section 7: Language and Learning English

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about language.

56. Are you or anybody in your family attending English language classes?

1. YES. If so, who provides the classes and when do you attend? [WRITE IN DETAILS]

2. NO. If not, do you think you or any member of your family would benefit from attending a class?

[WRITE IN]

57. Can I ask you about your use of English? [TICK BOX]. If possible to obtain responses from both interviewee and spouse, do so.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
How well do you understand what you read in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How well do you understand what you hear in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How well can you write in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How well can you speak in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

58. When speaking English, how well can you: [TICK BOX]

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Say a few words in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk to people in shops in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk about everyday things to English-speaking friends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold a conversation with English-speaking friends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

59. [IF INTERVIEWEE HAS CHILDREN] How well do your children speak English now?

[WRITE IN]

60. Do you have access to an interpreter, if you need one?

[WRITE IN]

61. Are you now familiar with local people's accents or do you still have difficulty understanding them?

[WRITE IN]

### Section 8: Asylum and Citizenship

I would like to ask you a couple of questions about asylum and citizenship.

62. Have you applied for British citizenship?

1. YES

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

2. NO

Do you intend to apply for British citizenship at some time?

[WRITE IN]

63. Do you have other members of your family still in the DR Congo? Who are they?

[WRITE IN DETAILS]

64. Are you in contact with them? [WRITE IN]

### Section 9: In conclusion

I'd like to finish off with a few very general questions and some questions about the future.

65. You've now lived in Motherwell for around five years. Can you tell me three positive things about living here?

[WRITE IN]

66. And can you tell me three negative things about living in Motherwell?

[WRITE IN]

67. And has your overall experience of living in Motherwell been positive or negative?

[WRITE IN]

68. Do you plan to stay in Motherwell?

1. Yes

2. No

69. Can you tell us why you made that decision? [WRITE IN]

70. If not staying, where do you plan to move to? What attracts you about that place? [WRITE IN]

71. If not staying, are there things which would encourage you to stay?

[WRITE IN]

72. Finally, is there anything else that you would like to add?

[WRITE IN]

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY**



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