

Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network

Year 1 Report
2023-2024



Introduction

In June 2023, the journey of the Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network started with the Supporting New Scots in Lanarkshire Conference. Over 70 delegates heard lived-experience talks, received advice from organisations currently supporting New Scots, and took part in an afternoon discussion session to determine the future of support for New Scots in Lanarkshire. One of the main results from this conference was the recommendation to start a Pan-Lanarkshire network to bring together partners from the public, private, and third sector.

The Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network was established in October 2023 as a collaboration between Scottish Refugee Council, Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLan), Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL) and NHS Lanarkshire. Since then, there have been five scheduled meetings, as well as one additional Refugee Festival information session. The network meetings have had a total of 152 attendees, from 39 organisations. The total number of organisations receiving information distributed through the network’s mailing list is 63.

This report will reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past year. We will look back at the recommendations from the conference report and, with help from the Network, revise them to make appropriate recommendations for Year 2.

Looking ahead, we believe that it is essential for the Network to be in the hands of community organisations. Over the first half of Year 2, we are intending to hand the network over to third sector organisations representing New Scots with lived experience.



Timeline

October 2023 | Online
Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network
Presentations from Scottish Refugee Council.

A poll resulted in the decision to meet on a quarterly basis, the venue alternating between South and North Lanarkshire.

February 2024 | Hamilton
Refugee Festival Scotland Funding Info Session
This session was an opportunity for organisations to discuss event ideas for Refugee Festival 2024, to find other organisations that might be interested in a joint event, as well as to find out more about past projects and how to apply.

June 2024 | Blantyre
Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network
Updates from North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire Council Resettlement Teams and Scottish Refugee Council.

June 2023 | Motherwell
Supporting New Scots in Lanarkshire Conference
Presentations from New Scots, organisations, & group discussions established the need for a Pan-Lanarkshire network.

January 2024 | East Kilbride
Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network
Presentations from Scottish Refugee Council and North Lanarkshire Council.

Workshop: themes to be covered in Network meetings: members requested discussing good practice, exploring partnership funding applications, updates from SRC, and employability.

Members identified as key aims of the network: building connections and referral pathways, how to make services more accessible, sharing information, and identifying gaps.

SRC Workshop: We explored good practice through case studies.

April 2024 | Coatbridge
Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network
Presentations from Scottish Refugee Council and Third Sector Human Rights and Equalities (THRE).

Workshop: How to meaningfully involve people with lived experience in your work.

October 2024 | Motherwell
Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network
Theme: Mental Health.

Updates on Funding and SRC’s Refugee Support Service. With presentations on NHS Lanarkshire Mental Health Strategy and a grassroots perspective on mental health support from Integrate All.

Workshop: What’s Next and Reviewing the Recommendations (Results on pages 7 & 8)

In-depth Themes:

Over the course of the past year, the meetings of the Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network have become a forum for our members to connect, share experiences, and support each other.

While we started off with plans to alternate between online and in-person meetings, we quickly realised that in-person meetings were allowing for vital time to connect, especially during coffee breaks and workshops, and even after the meetings.

We have covered a range of topics in our Network meetings. These topics can be categorised into three themes:

Information / Advice

Collaboration

Sharing Best Practice



Asylum Seeker

A person who has made a claim to be considered for protection to a state which has signed the UN Convention on Refugees 1951 and is waiting for a decision.

- Live in accommodation provided by the Home Office
- Receive £49.18 a week, or £8.86 if in hotel accommodation
- No access to public funds
- Access to healthcare
- Are not allowed to work for the first 12-months

Refugee

A person whose individual application for protection has received a positive decision. This means that they have been granted Leave to Remain.

- Moved out of Home Office-provided accommodation after move-on period
- No longer receive asylum support payments
- Access to benefits
- Access to both further and higher education
- Can apply for any employment

Information / Advice:

In our first session, the Scottish Refugee Council shared information on the difference in rights and entitlements of refugees and asylum seekers. While these two terms are frequently used in one sentence and to describe one population group, the differences in rights mean that refugees and asylum seekers face different challenges in society.

In addition to sharing information about the 2024 Refugee Festival funding at our regular meeting in January, we organised an info session specifically focused on this topic in February. We are delighted that a few organisations were funded in Lanarkshire to organise a few events for the Festival this year and hope that the Festival will continue to grow across Lanarkshire for years to come.

Our third session included an update on the New Scots Strategy, which had just been published a few weeks prior. A few of our members had organised consultation sessions for the Strategy, ensuring that the views of New Scots in Lanarkshire contributed to this document. More information on the strategy can be [found here](#).

Throughout the year, the network followed a members-led approach, continuously asking for suggestions regarding themes and workshops. The network has provided an opportunity to the Resettlement Teams of North and South Lanarkshire Councils, as well as Scottish Refugee Council, to share updates with the members.

Additionally, we encouraged organisations to share information with the network at the end of every meeting in the “Updates” section of the agenda, which developed into a great networking opportunity. In between meetings, VASLan’s Resettlement Officer distributed relevant information via email.



With a unified approach through this network, New Scots are better able to navigate available services without confusion or delays, ensuring that their needs are met in a timely and efficient manner.

Collaboration:

In our first in-person meeting, which was the second meeting of the Network, we encouraged all participants to discuss Best Practice by choosing a case study and discussing how they could create a support system with the other organisations in their group, as well as identifying gaps in support.

As a result of this exercise, participants felt more confident in their support for New Scots knowing who they could refer New Scots to for additional support. A key learning point was that not every organisation needs to provide all support and highlighted the need to collaborate and share information.

Through the network, we are also looking to improve collaboration going forward, for example by encouraging organisations to apply for shared funding to deliver projects together or at a larger scale than it would be possible if one organisation was applying on their own.

“The network has provided a unique space for stakeholders across sectors to come together, share expertise, and develop coordinated strategies. This collaboration has strengthened the collective impact of our efforts and built a more cohesive support system for the New Scots.”



Best Practice:

A key focus of our meetings has been on Best Practice.

The network is a space for organisations that are experienced in supporting New Scots, as well as organisations and groups that are only just starting to support New Scots.

Therefore, one of the founding goals for the Network has always been to become a safe space for the sharing of Best Practice - enabling all members to grow together.

We focused on Best Practice specifically in the 3rd and 4th sessions. In the third meeting, our focus was on how to best involve people with lived experience in our work.

Answering the three questions:



1 What values or principles do you need to meaningfully involve / engage people in the delivery of your work?

2 What challenges might come up when involving people or getting involved? What solutions could be put in place?

3 If you can't involve people in decision-making, how do you engage with people to inform your work?

Our members learned how to provide the space for lived experience in a respectful and empowering manner. Our key takeaways were that including people with lived experience in our work is essential and should be a focus of our efforts to ensure that we are truly empowering New Scots. If, at any point, direct involvement is not possible, this needs to be communicated clearly and alternatives need to be found.

Additional sharing of best practices was enabled through a Third Sector Human Rights & Equalities (THRE) training presentation, as well as a presentation on Uncovering Purpose and Healthy Systems by North Lanarkshire Council's Arts Development Team.

Recommendations:

In our last report for the Supporting New Scots in Lanarkshire Conference, we listed four recommendations. These recommendations formed the basis for the Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network in October 2023. At our October 2024 meeting, we revised the previous versions and agreed on the following recommendations:

1

To funders and the government: To create long-term funding streams dedicated to supporting New Scots.

The network agreed that this priority had intensified over the past year. Our members identified that the constant changes in funding cycles lead to broken connections and a lack of trust between service providers and the community due to impactful services ending. We highlighted the need for grassroots funding as well as partnership approaches to funding.

2

To the network and partners: To collect impact information to continuously improve partnership working and to advocate on behalf of the sector.

As a network, we agree that formulating recommendations and reflecting on achievements creates a sense of community. We want to go further than that and improve the mapping of needs in the area, as well as our information gathering and sharing processes. This will further improve our partnerships, enabling us to advocate for the implementation of the rights of New Scots in our communities.

3

To all sectors and partners: To prioritise meaningful inclusion of lived experience at all levels of decision-making.

As a network, we have identified the need to meaningfully include individuals with lived experience to ensure that culturally sensitive and antiracist policies and procedures are implemented. Additionally, we encourage stakeholders and decision-makers without lived experience to take accountability for implementing these values and engaging in relevant, continuous training.

4

To all sectors and partners: To develop more opportunities for formal and informal language skills development.

This priority has mostly remained unchanged since the last report. While we would like to acknowledge that some members have improved the provision of language cafes in parts of Lanarkshire, we still need to emphasise that investment in the training and recruitment of additional ESOL teachers is essential and that further opportunities for informal language training need to be created.



“

We need to be visible, we need to be up there and we need to support each other. This vital network is helping the community to do that.

”

What's Next?

After a year of the Network being facilitated by the Scottish Refugee Council, VASLan, VANL, and NHS Lanarkshire, we believe that the natural progression for the Network is to be co-organised and co-delivered alongside community leaders and people with lived experience of the immigration and asylum system.

Since the beginning of the Network, the plan had always been to take this step after an initial period of facilitation, if there was a demand for the Network meetings to continue.

At the October 2024 meeting, we discussed the future of the Network and what the hand-over should look like. The Network agreed that the meetings should continue and that they supported a community-led approach.

We outlined that the steering group would co-organise the next meeting, the first meeting of 2025, with at least one organisation who are members of the Network. In the meantime, conversations would be organised with members to identify organisations that would be interested in facilitating one or more meetings. We learned from our members that most organisations would not have the capacity to facilitate the Network, but that they would still like to be involved in the planning.

Looking forward, we are focusing on widening our membership to include even more grassroots New Scots groups. This will ensure that the future of the Network will be fully shaped by communities with lived experience.

If you have any questions about this report or the Lanarkshire New Scots Integration Network, please contact:

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Resources

Please note that this information is accurate as of March 2025.

Scottish Refugee Council

- Helpline: Free helpline for confidential information and advice on refugee and asylum issues. Phone number: 0808 1967 274. [Click here for more information.](#)
- New Scots Connect Map: A map created by SRC to help people who are new to Scotland to find local support, information and advice. The map can be accessed [here](#).

NHS Inform

- Health information provided in different languages and formats - including BSL, Easy Read and translations. [View it here.](#)

Migrant Help

- Free asylum helpline: 0808 8010 503
- Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Support Scotland contact details: traffickingscotland@migranthelpuk.org, 0141 8847900 / 01412128553 (out of hours).

Just Right Scotland

- Second Tier Immigration & Asylum Advice Line: 0141 406 5353 (Wednesdays, 2-4pm).

Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA)

- TARA provide support to women who may be trafficked and exploited. Phone number: 0141 276 7724.

Hope Not Hate

- Resources for community organisations can be [found here](#).
- Advice for people seeking asylum and refugees who are concerned about far-right violence (translations available) can be [accessed here](#).

Right to Remain

- Provide a guide to the UK immigration and asylum system on their website, [linked here](#).