

**To: Community Care Health and Wellbeing Thematic Board**

**On: 14 September 2016**

Report by:

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## **Renfrewshire Integration Network proposal**

### **1. Summary**

Renfrewshire's strong history of welcoming people from other countries is acknowledged and welcomed by the Community Planning Partnership and recent developments at both local and national level have highlighted the need for a cohesive network to continue to support this work.

The Scottish Government's 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities', a strategy covering 2014-2017, has a vision of 'a Scotland where refugees are able to build a new life from the day they arrive in Scotland and to realise their full potential with the support of mainstream services; and where they become active members of our communities with strong social relationships.'

Integration Networks in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area have been established over the years to support this idea of active and participative citizenship and it is proposed that an integration Network is established in Renfrewshire.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Board approves and supports the establishment of an Integration Network for Renfrewshire

### **3. Background**

Renfrewshire has a strong history of welcoming people from other countries, and the last few years has seen an increase in the number of people arriving either as refugees, asylum seekers, students, migrant workers or immigrants.

The Community Planning Partnership welcomes this diversity of culture, and already a number of groups have been established to provide support and networking opportunities. Organisations such as Renfrewshire Effort to Empower Minorities (REEM), the Association of African Communities in Renfrewshire (AACR) and the Renfrewshire Polish Association (RenPA) have all developed as a result of the changing demographics and are supporting people to access services that they require.

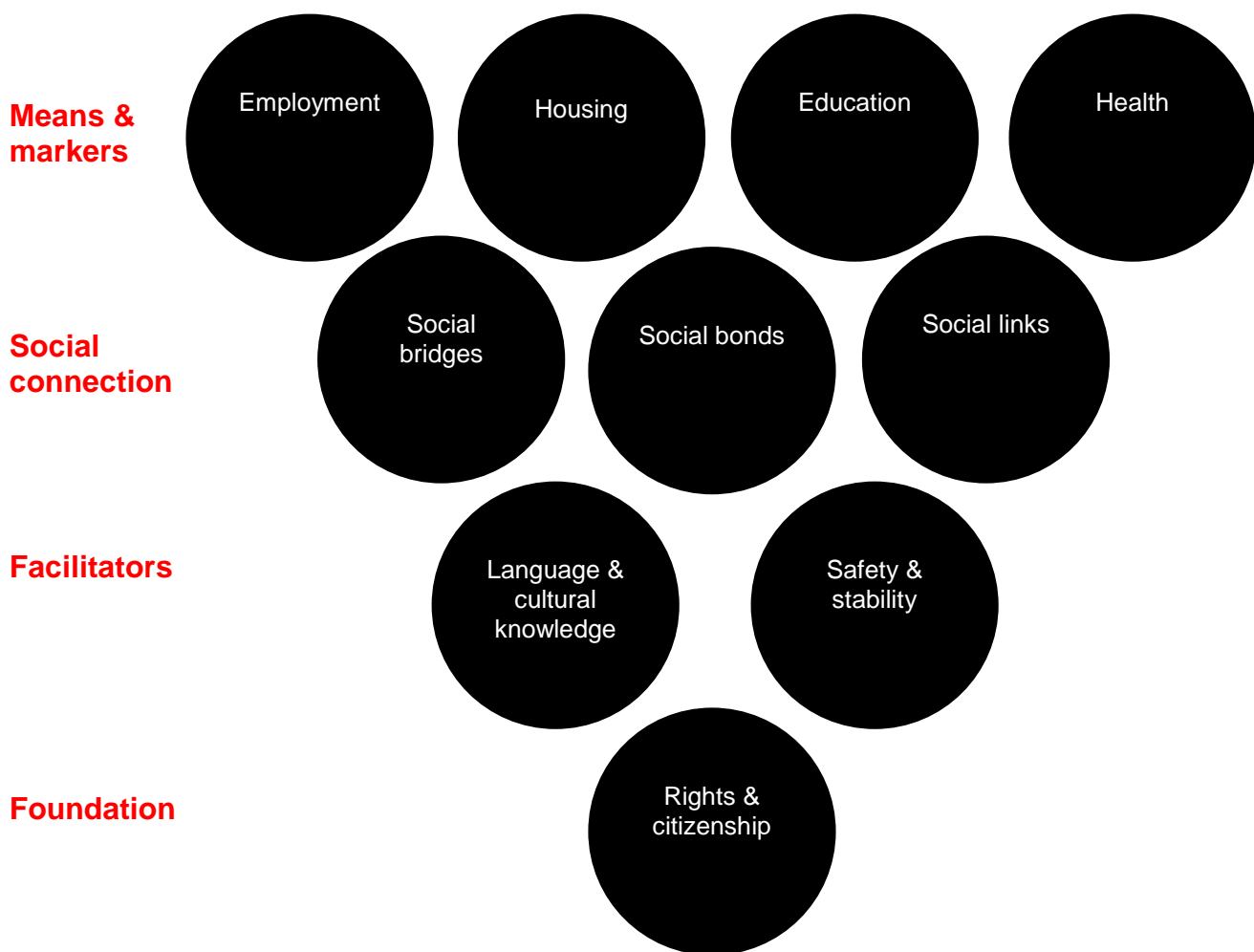
In addition, there is a Diversity and Equality Alliance in Renfrewshire (DEAR) group which comprises representatives from a number of groups and organisations and which contributes to the successful promotion and development of the current, emerging and evolving equalities agenda within Renfrewshire.

Renfrewshire's recent participation in the Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme to resettle Syrian refugee families in the area has highlighted the good will of the local community to welcome people in need, however it also highlighted some of the issues that people face when they first arrive, such as learning English, accessing services and general orientation around their new area. The role of volunteers and the wider community in supporting people to successfully integrate is vital, and a number of Integration Networks in the Greater Glasgow area have developed over the years in recognition of this.

The Scottish Government's 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities', a strategy covering 2014-2017, has a vision of 'a Scotland where refugees are able to build a new life from the day they arrive in Scotland and to realise their full potential with the support of mainstream services; and where they become active members of our communities with strong social relationships.' Although this vision specifically relates to refugees, it is applicable for all people arriving in the country to make a new life. From a cultural perspective, the arrival of people from other countries can enrich our cultural diversity, expand the world view of our children and bring new languages, skills and experience. From an economic perspective, Scotland's ageing population means that inward migration can help maintain population targets for economic growth and wellbeing, and therefore encouraging people to stay and play a full part in Scottish life is vital.

### **Indicators of Integration Framework – Ager & Strang (2004)**

A study was commissioned by the Home Office in 2002 to improve understanding of what refugee integration actually means in the contemporary UK context, and to guide the Home Office's future work in this area. The Indicators of Integration framework was developed as a result of this and is structured around ten key domains that the evidence gathered suggests are of central importance to the integration of refugees. Within each of these ten domains a number of indicators are suggested as a means of assessing integration with respect to that specific domain.



**Means and markers** are key areas for the participation of refugees in the life of communities. They serve as markers of integration in so far as they show evidence of achieving or accessing things that are valued within the community. They also serve as means to those ends, in that they will often help achieve other things relevant to integration.

**Social connection** involves the different social relationships and networks that help towards integration. Those connections may be with people who share your own experiences and values through ethnicity, religion or country of origin and are defined as **bonds** within communities. Connections with other groups are seen as **bridges** between communities. Finally, connections that help to access services and be fully involved as a citizen are defined as **links** to services and government. All serve to connect an individual or group into the wider community.

**Facilitators** are the key skills, knowledge and circumstances that help people to be active, engaged and secure within communities.

**Foundation** refers to the principles that define what you have a right to expect from the state and from other members of your communities and what is expected of you. These principles include the rights that are given to individuals, and the expectations and obligations of citizenship.

## The definition of integration implicit in the framework

Ager & Strang's study also gives a useful definition of integration which can be applied to all people arriving in a new country, and which a Renfrewshire Integration Network could adopt as a basis for formation.

Their definition states that an individual or group is integrated within a society when they:

- *achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities;*
- *are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and*
- *have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship.*

## Developing a local Integration Network

As previously mentioned, a number of Networks already exist in the Greater Glasgow area having developed over a period of time, often in response to the arrival of very large groups of people from one specific culture, eg. the Roma population in Govanhill.

Taking account of the framework above, an obvious starting point to developing a local Network would be to consider the **social connections** area and to begin by identifying the bonds that already exist, ie. the groups, networks and communities already established to provide supports. As previously mentioned, there are some organisations already in existence and there are also churches of all denominations, mosques and informal networks providing support and information to minority ethnic individuals across Renfrewshire.

The first step would therefore be to contact all of these groups to bring them together and to discuss what already works well and where the gaps might be. We can then begin to establish what links already exist and what facilitators need to be developed.

The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) has agreed that they could potentially help to support this work to help us get started.

## 4. Resources

Funding has still to be agreed for the work required – namely, involvement of SCDC and potential focus groups with existing refugees and migrants.

## 5. Community Involvement/Engagement

The work will fully involve a number of local third sector organisations and community planning partners, as well as people who have resettled in Renfrewshire in recent years. The DEAR group mentioned above have endorsed the plans for the work and will have oversight of all developments.