



Welcome to Sheffield Reflections on 8 years experience of receiving resettled refugees at the local level

Based on the experiences of the city of
Sheffield and the Yorkshire & Humber
region in the UK



The city of Sheffield has over 8 years experience of receiving resettled refugees. This publication draws on Sheffield's expertise to explain the 'why and how' of refugee resettlement in Sheffield – how the city got involved, the partnerships that drive the local programme and the benefits refugee resettlement has brought to the city.

If your city or town is thinking about receiving resettled refugees in the future, if there is a national resettlement programme in your country that you could become involved in, or if refugee resettlement is a new topic for your locality, then this publication is for you. Whilst cities and towns across Europe vary greatly in terms of their local environments and the national contexts within which they work, we hope that the experiences of Sheffield will provide you with ideas and tools for refugee resettlement in your locality. Ultimately, we hope it inspires you join Sheffield in welcoming resettled refugees and providing the safety and security within which they can flourish as new citizens.



Councillor Julie Dore
Leader of the Council,
Sheffield City Council

Foreword

Whoever saves one life saves the world entire

Resettlement involves the transfer of refugees from the country in which they first sought asylum, generally a developing country, to a third country that has agreed to admit them with a long-term or permanent resident status. Resettlement provides protection for refugees whose safety is immediately at risk. It is a tool of international protection and an expression of international solidarity and burden-sharing amongst states.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR) estimates for 2012, that approximately 172,000 refugees around the world will require resettlement. As global resettlement needs vastly outstrip available resettlement places, only a small number of these refugees will be able to access resettlement and the possibility of building a new life and future for themselves and their children.

Sheffield has a long tradition of providing a place of safety for those fleeing persecution. As the Leader of Sheffield City Council, I am proud that the city has, for the past eight years, been able to make a small contribution to meeting the needs of refugees through establishing and operating a successful local refugee resettlement programme. Our programme has given us an opportunity to extend our longstanding commitment to upholding human rights, and to express our solidarity with the developing countries that receive and host the majority of the world's refugees.

Sheffield became the first city in the United Kingdom to welcome resettled refugees through the national Gateway Protection Programme in 2004. The Gateway programme is the UK resettlement programme operated by the Home Office in conjunction with UNHCR. To date, 640 resettled refugees from countries including Liberia, Congo, Burma, Bhutan, Iraq and Somalia have found a new home in our city.

Producing this publication has enabled us to look back on our many successes and achievements in developing Sheffield's resettlement programme.

Since the first group of 66 Liberians arrived in the city in 2004, our programme has grown, developed and improved. We have used the knowledge and experience built up over the programme to enhance our practice and processes and improve both short and long-term integration outcomes for resettled refugees. I am delighted that we now have the opportunity to share our learning and experiences with you.

What are the factors have made our resettlement programme successful? The strong partnerships between the city and our NGO and civil society partners are a major contributing factor to our ongoing success. Together with our partners and our local communities and neighbourhoods, we enable refugees to live in safety and security, sharing opportunities to improve their lives with others in the city, and contributing as citizens to the growth and development of Sheffield. We recognise that refugees are a diverse group of people, and the support we offer with and through our partners and citizens ensures that Sheffield's economy can benefit from resettled refugees' skills, knowledge and experience.

We are particularly pleased that Sheffield citizens have warmly welcomed resettled refugees into their neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces and homes. Our city's schools and educational facilities offer refugee children and young people the opportunity to achieve their full potential and refugees who arrived in previous groups have volunteered to support arrivals in subsequent years. In this way, resettled refugees have themselves become a wonderful resource within our programme, and an important driving force in the ongoing improvement of how we 'do' resettlement in Sheffield.

Another key principle that underpins successful resettlement is the investment of time, energy and resources in planning for resettlement well ahead of refugees arriving into our city. Whilst it is up to each individual town and city to decide how a resettlement programme will best work for their particular locality and local circumstances, what is important to remember is that establishing a local refugee resettlement programme – whilst not without its challenges – is entirely possible, and can bring a range of positive benefits and impacts for local areas and populations.

Here in Sheffield, we are delighted to be the lead city partner in the International Catholic Migration Commission's SHARE project, an 18-month programme to build a European resettlement network of municipalities and regions. We invite you to join us in the SHARE network, and in the programme of SHARE activities that offers opportunities to visit the cities of Sheffield, Hull and Bradford, and the Greater Manchester region in the UK, learn more about resettlement through training and information-sharing and develop sustainable and meaningful relationships with your peer cities and towns across Europe. Whether you are in Belgium, France, Poland, Portugal or any other European country, we believe that learning about our experiences in Sheffield will support the development of a refugee resettlement programme in your locality. We are immensely grateful for the platform for exchange provided to us – and to you! – by the SHARE network.

Europe should collectively be able to offer many more resettlement places than it currently does. European cities and towns have a vital role to play both in receiving resettled refugees, and in providing the welcoming communities and neighbourhoods that support them to become active, participating European citizens. As cities and towns in an increasingly global world, it should be our legacy that we each did our small bit to provide safety, security and the prospect of a new life for those refugees in need of protection. By coming together to share our experiences, overcome the challenges and celebrate our successes, we will be able to say that together, we made a real difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Dore". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Julie" and "Dore" being capitalized and prominent.

Councillor Julie Dore
Leader of Sheffield City Council

The Lord Mayor of Sheffield greets Liberian refugees at the Town Hall



Courtesy of Sheffield City Council

Contents

- 05 What is resettlement?
- 06 The Gateway Protection Programme
- 09 Introducing Sheffield
- 12 Resettled refugees in the
Yorkshire & Humber region
- 14 Sheffield's resettlement programme
- 16 Introducing Fatuma
- 17 Planning the basics: Pre-arrival
coordination for resettlement
- 21 Arrival and reception:
The first week in Sheffield
- 23 Introducing Hull
- 24 Introducing Eman and Michael
- 25 Laying the foundations for integration:
The first 12 months
- 29 Introducing Bradford
- 30 Introducing Abdul and Mohammed
- 31 Supporting refugee resettlement:
A role for the media
- 32 Beyond 12 months: The journey
to citizenship

Performance by Rohingya children, Bradford



Courtesy of Horton Housing Association, Bradford

What is refugee resettlement?

What is resettlement?

Resettlement is one of three durable solutions available to refugees, alongside repatriation and local integration in the country of asylum. Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third country that admits them – as refugees – with a long-term or permanent residence status. Resettlement generally carries with it the possibility for refugees to become naturalised citizens of that country in the future.

Why resettlement?

Resettlement is a tool of international protection for individual refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country where they have sought refuge, and an expression of international solidarity with the developing countries that host the majority of the world's refugees.

The resettlement process

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is the international agency mandated to protect refugees and look for durable solutions. UNHCR identifies refugees in need of resettlement, and proposes that governments accept them for resettlement in their countries. State participation in resettlement is voluntary, and it is national governments that decide which of the refugees referred to them will be offered permanent places of residence in their countries.

The majority of refugees accepted for resettlement receive information about their resettlement country before they travel, through organised briefings and/or printed information. This is known as pre-departure cultural orientation. Local authorities, NGOs and other organisations working with resettled refugees in resettlement countries continue this process of orientation in local communities after the refugees' arrival.



Who is resettled?

Of the 10.5 million refugees of concern to UNHCR in the world, just 1% are submitted for resettlement. Aside from refugees fleeing persecution, UNHCR also refers vulnerable refugees with specific needs for resettlement.

The Gateway Protection Programme

The UK's refugee resettlement programme

Rohingya students, Bradford



Courtesy of Horton Housing Association, Bradford

The UK's refugee resettlement programme – the Gateway Protection Programme – was established in 2004. The programme is entirely separate from the UK's asylum system and programmes for refugees granted status in the UK via the asylum process. Via the Gateway programme, the UK government is committed to receiving 750 resettled refugees every year.

The Gateway Protection Programme is operated by the Home Office, a UK central government department, and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR refers refugees assessed as in need of resettlement to the Home Office. After receiving UNHCR's referrals, the Home Office then conducts missions to countries of first asylum to interview referred refugees and selects those it accepts for resettlement in the UK. To date, the Home Office has conducted missions to a wide range of countries, including Bangladesh, Guinea and Thailand. During 2004-12, over 2000 refugees were resettled to the UK.

When resettled refugees arrive into the UK, they are immediately granted refugee status with permanent residency, with the right to apply for immediate family members to join them in the UK. The family reunification process can be long and complex, and many refugees spend a number of years in the UK before being reunited with their family. Resettled refugees can apply for UK citizenship for themselves and their dependants after a period of five years residency in the UK.

In the seven years since the Gateway Protection Programme was established, resettlement programmes have operated in fifteen UK local authority areas. Local authority participation in resettlement is voluntary, and it is UK local authorities that determine how many resettled refugees they would like to receive into their area every year.

Local authorities were initially hesitant to begin receiving groups of what were often very vulnerable refugees, many of whom had lived in highly insecure and challenging circumstances for long periods. Those that did found the programme to be an extremely positive experience, and many repeated their engagement over a number of years.

On arrival, resettled refugees are housed directly in local communities. The first group of refugees resettled to the UK via the Gateway Protection Programme were 66 Liberians, who arrived into Sheffield from Guinea in March 2004.

Resettled refugees since 2004:

Yorkshire & Humberside

1465

Greater Manchester

1443



The Gateway Protection Programme is a one-year programme funded by the UK central government Home Office and the European Refugee Fund (ERF). The ERF is a European Commission funding programme that supports activities targeted at refugees, including refugee resettlement¹. In the ERF multiannual programme for 2008-2013, the ERF supports national governments' resettlement activities and provides also a lump sum of €4000 for specific categories of vulnerable refugees. A similar, more flexible mechanism is under discussion for the period 2014-20².

Funding for the Gateway Protection Programme provides a complete package of support for resettled refugees in the 12 months after their arrival, including specialist integration support, provision of accommodation, and access to education and healthcare. From the moment of arrival in the UK, resettled refugees are entitled to public assistance to meet housing rental costs. After the initial 12 months, service provision for resettled refugees is mainstreamed into service and welfare provision for the wider population.

In 2011, the Home Office rationalised the UK's resettlement programme. Whilst the number of refugees resettled to the UK remains unchanged at 750 per year, the number of towns and cities receiving resettled refugees has reduced. Following a competitive tendering process in 2011, refugees resettled to the UK are received by one of the three UK Gateway programmes – in Sheffield and Hull, in Bradford and in the Greater Manchester region. The Sheffield resettlement partnership consists of two local authorities – Sheffield and Hull – and a national NGO, the British Refugee Council. Together, this partnership receives 180 resettled refugees each year. Another UK programme is operated by Horton Housing, a registered social landlord that resettles 100 refugees per year in the city of Bradford. The third and largest UK resettlement programme is operated by the national NGO Refugee Action and local authorities in the Greater Manchester region. This partnership receives 470 resettled refugees in the region every year. Each of the organisations within the three partnerships has an individual grant agreement with both the Home Office and the ERF.

Footnotes are on the inside back cover

Socialising in Sheffield



Courtesy of the British Refugee Council

Asylum in the UK

The UK receives approximately 23,000 applications for asylum every year. The Home Office funds a national system for the distribution of asylum seekers known as the 'dispersal programme', within which housing and support services for asylum seekers are provided in towns and cities across the UK. Local authorities agree to receive dispersed asylum seekers in their areas, and often act as housing providers for the programme. At December 2011, 23,485 asylum seekers and their dependants were living in dispersal accommodation, 421 of whom were resident in Sheffield.

Introducing... Sheffield



Sheffield is the second largest city in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Approximately 550,000 people live in the city, a figure that is projected to increase to around 600,000 by 2020. Three factors have contributed to this sustained and continuing increase in Sheffield's population – the growing numbers of young people moving to the city as university students or to pursue opportunities for employment, the continued increase in the city's birth rate and longer life expectancy.

Sheffield is an increasingly diverse city, both ethnically and culturally, in which around 17% of current residents identify themselves as being from a minority ethnic background. The city is home to both long-standing, established migrant communities and newer communities that have emerged since 2001, when asylum seekers began to arrive into the city via the national dispersal programme.

Sheffield Cathedral



Courtesy of Sheffield City Council

Peace Gardens, Sheffield



Sheffield's economy was historically built on steel, an industry that provided the majority of employment in the city for many years and led to Sheffield becoming known as the 'Steel City'. Similarly to many other UK manufacturing towns and cities, Sheffield's economy was severely affected by the steep industrial decline of the 1980s and early 1990s, during which approximately one quarter of all jobs in the city ceased to exist.

Since the mid-1990s, however, Sheffield's economy has been revitalised by the rapid growth of the service sector in the city, evidenced by the 22% increase in jobs between 1995 and 2008. Currently, around 240,000 people work in Sheffield in approximately 20,000 businesses, the vast majority in the service sector. As in other localities across Europe, the current economic crisis has created severe economic and financial challenges for the city.

Approximately 58,500 students attend Sheffield's two universities. Many students remain in Sheffield after completing their education, and the city's economy benefits from the 27.7% of the population who are educated to university level.

Courtesy of Sheffield City Council

Additionally, the proportion of Sheffield residents with no educational qualifications has recently fallen – from 16% in 2008 to 12.4% in 2009 – a comparable level to other UK cities.

Since the establishment of the UK's national asylum dispersal programme eleven ago years, the presence of asylum seekers and refugees in Sheffield has enabled the city administration and its partners to develop extensive expertise in working with these groups. The city is subsequently home to a range of specialist housing, health and educational services for migrant communities. A number of voluntary organisations have also developed, through which Sheffield citizens extend friendship and support for newcomers to the city via initiatives such as conversation clubs, befriending schemes and other social activities.

The city's identity as a place of refuge and security for those seeking sanctuary was cemented by the creation of the national City of Sanctuary movement in Sheffield in 2005. City of Sanctuary aims to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK, by creating a network of towns and cities throughout the country that welcome newcomers as full citizens and community members.

In 2007, and with the support of Sheffield City Council, Sheffield became the UK's first official City of Sanctuary. Since then, 18 other UK towns and cities have followed Sheffield's example in providing a home for local sanctuary movements.

The expertise developed via the dispersal programme and the strong existing partnerships with NGOs working in the city were instrumental in the city's 2004 decision to receive resettled refugees. This decision was taken on behalf of the city by a cross-party group of local politicians overseeing local refugee issues, who endorsed the formal partnerships that continue to underpin the high-quality resettlement programme offered by the city today. This strong partnership approach to 'doing' resettlement – incorporating the expertise provided by the key NGO integration support partner and the strong community infrastructure in the city – will continue to underpin resettlement activities in Sheffield in the coming years.

City Hall, Sheffield



Courtesy of Sheffield City Council

Yorkshire & Humber Region

Yorkshire & Humber is one of nine English regions. It has a population of just over 5m people and is home to seven major UK cities, including Sheffield, Bradford and Hull. Regional government in the UK has been subject to many changes. In contrast to many other European countries, the UK currently has no formal, regional domestic government. However, many local authorities collaborate on regional economic and developmental priorities and initiatives, and services such as transport and health are often delivered at a regional level. The Yorkshire & Humber region is coterminous with the European constituency of the same name, and has six representatives in the European Parliament.

Resettled refugees in the Yorkshire and Humber region

Prior to beginning their resettlement journey, many refugees will have spent long periods in the country in which they first sought asylum, often living in insecure circumstances and struggling to meet basic needs.

Approximately two-thirds of the world's refugees currently of concern to UNHCR are resident in refugee camps or informal settlements. The remainder live in urban situations in cities in a country of asylum. Some resettled refugee children will never have seen their family's home country, having been born in exile.

Since 2004, resettled refugees received by the towns and cities of the Yorkshire and Humber region have come from a wide range of countries, ethnicities and refugee situations.

Who and why?

Bhutanese

Cause of flight:
State persecution and forced expulsion of minorities
Country of asylum:
Nepal
Refugee situation:
15-20 years in refugee camps

Burmese and Karen

Cause of flight:
State persecution of minority groups and political activists in Myanmar
Country of asylum:
Thailand
Refugee situation:
Up to 25 years in refugee camps

Congolese

Cause of flight:
Civil war (1998-2003); ongoing political instability and violence
Country of asylum:
Uganda
Refugee situation:
10-15 in camps/urban areas

Ethiopian

Cause of flight:
State persecution of minority groups
Country of asylum:
Kenya (many via Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen)
Refugee situation:
Long-term residency in refugee camps

Iraqi

Cause of flight:
Conflict and ongoing insecurity
Country of asylum:
Syria and Jordan
Refugee situation:
4-8 years in urban areas

Liberian

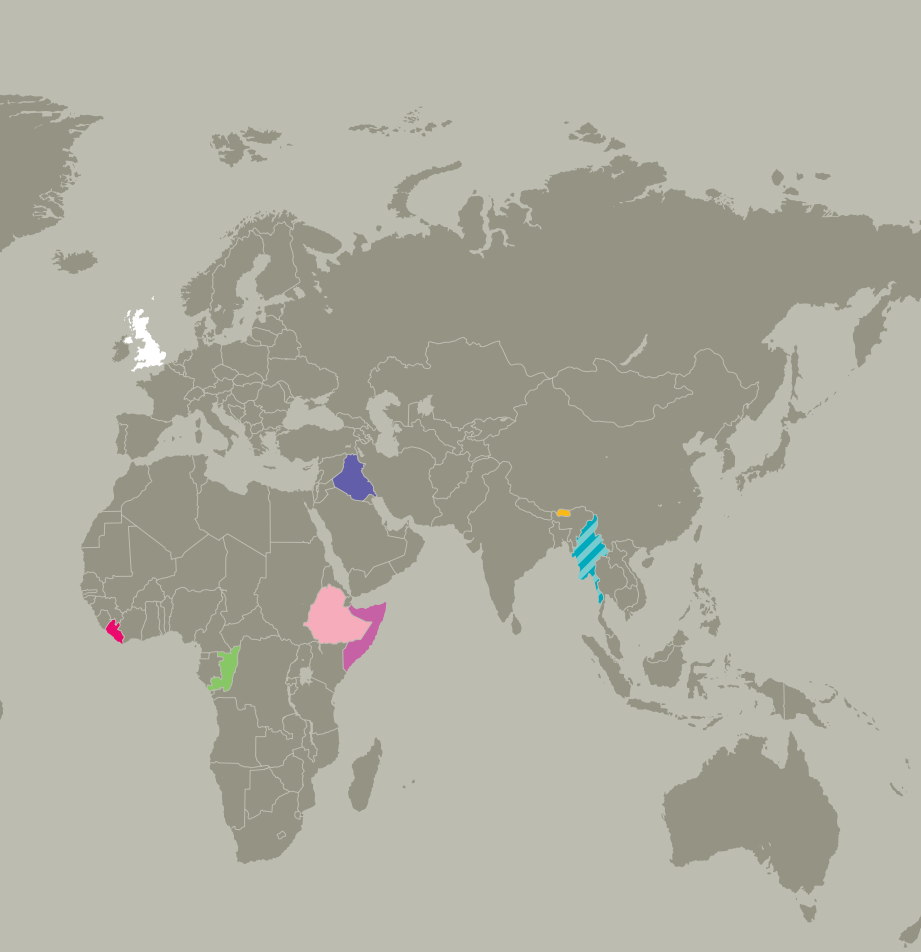
Cause of flight:
2 civil wars (1989-97 and 1999-2003)
Country of asylum:
Guinea and Sierra Leone
Refugee situation:
10 years in refugee camps

Rohingya

Cause of flight:
State persecution of minority groups in Myanmar
Country of asylum:
Bangladesh
Refugee situation:
15-20 years in refugee camps

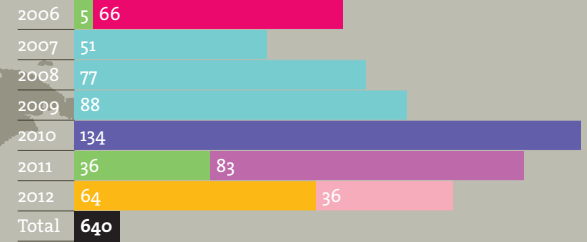
Somali

Cause of flight:
Conflict and ongoing insecurity
Country of asylum:
Kenya
Refugee situation:
Up to 20 years in refugee camps

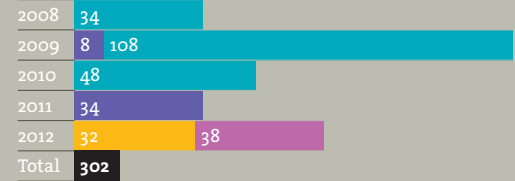


Numbers

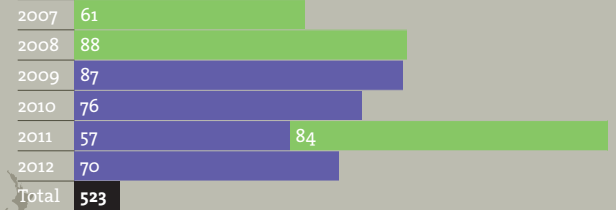
Sheffield



Bradford



Hull



Sheffield's resettlement programme

Sheffield has received a total of 640 resettled refugees since the programme began in 2004. During 2011-14, a further 270 resettled refugees – 90 per year – will be received by the city. The central government Home Office determines the nationalities and family composition of the refugees, and works with the city to agree the size of the groups and the frequency of their arrival into the city. All resettled refugees arriving into Sheffield will have attended some pre-departure cultural orientation sessions in the country of first asylum, focused on providing basic information about the UK and their future life in the country.

Since 2004, the role of the local authority within the programme has changed significantly. Until 2010, the local authority maintained political oversight over resettlement in the city, whilst operational delivery of the programme was led by the NGO partner, the British Refugee Council.

From 2010, the local authority became operationally involved in the programme for the first time, when it assumed responsibility for organising housing for refugees resettled in the city. In 2011, the role of the local authority again expanded when the city of Sheffield led a successful proposal to the Home Office to deliver the 2011-14 resettlement programme in both Sheffield and Hull.

Within the Sheffield-Hull resettlement partnership, and for the first 12 months of the programme, Refugee Council provides resettled refugees with specialist integration support and Hull and Sheffield local authorities organise and manage housing. The Home Office identifies which groups of refugees selected for resettlement to the UK will be received by each programme, and communicates with the Sheffield-Hull partnership to ensure factors such as existing refugee populations, appropriate language support and the capacity of each city to integrate specific refugee groups are considered within the allocation process.

To ensure strategic oversight and overall management of the Sheffield-Hull resettlement programme, senior staff from the two local authorities and the NGO partner Refugee Council meet on a quarterly basis as a regional Resettlement Partnership Group.

Local resettlement stakeholder groups – made up of the core partner organisations involved in the resettlement programme and occasional member organisations whose city remit includes resettled refugees – oversee the operational delivery of the programme in each city.

Core group members and their roles:

Sheffield City Council

- Finding and managing housing
- Placing resettled children and young people in schools
- Providing classroom-based support for resettled children and young people
- Delivering out-of-school programmes and activities (parents and children)

British Refugee Council

- Planning for arrival and reception – transport and interpreting
- Providing reception services and a 12-month integration support programme for all resettled refugees

Mulberry Practice (NHS)

- Initial health screenings and immediately necessary treatment
- Referring refugees to their local primary healthcare services after arrival

The group also includes occasional representation from Capita, the local agency responsible for administering financial assistance for housing costs, and JobCentre Plus (Sheffield), the UK's employment advice and support service.



Introducing...

Fatuma



Fatuma is a 22-year old woman from Somalia. She was born in a town on the Kenya-Somalia border as her parents were fleeing from Somalia to Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. Fatuma spent her entire childhood in the refugee camp.

In November 2010, when Fatuma was 20 years old, she was resettled to Sheffield together with her parents, four brothers and sister-in-law. Being young adults, Fatuma and one of her brothers moved to independent accommodation very close to their parents and other siblings. Fatuma feels that being resettled with family members was crucial to their integration. She has been able to support her parents, which has been very important, as they do not speak good English.

The family like the area where they live – they are close to halal shops and the Somali mosque, and there are several Somali families living nearby with whom they have become friends. This informal support has helped them to feel settled. The family attended the Refugee Council drop-in advice service, and learned about UK culture, systems and services through the group briefings that took place there.

Fatuma recalls the importance of Refugee Council making use of interpreters speaking her Somali dialect. This was essential, particularly at first, because of the complex information about UK systems that she needed to take in.

After her arrival, Fatuma attended language classes at an adult education college in Sheffield, and her English has quickly improved. Her long-term goal is to become a doctor, but she was keen to work and gain experience while she focused on improving her English. Fatuma started work as a volunteer residential care worker with elderly people soon after her arrival into Sheffield. In September 2011, she was offered a job by the same organisation and has been working there ever since.

At the end of her first year in the UK, Fatuma says: ***‘Today I am working, fully settled and feel as if I was born here. I have access to everything, to all services, and I know all my rights. I understand the right and wrong way to do things, and all this happened through the invaluable support provided by our integration worker.’***

I urge anyone who is a newly resettled refugee in the UK to listen to the advice of their support workers. I also urge them to ask their support workers for help, because they are the experts. Even though there are some other people in the community who give advice, this is not as reliable. I am very grateful to be in Sheffield – people are friendly, I like the city and I want to stay here for a long time’.

Planning the basics: Pre-arrival coordination for resettlement

In Sheffield, the regular arrival of small groups of resettled refugees into the city means planning for resettlement is an ongoing process, with defined roles and responsibilities and a collective, shared expertise amongst the member organisations of the local resettlement stakeholder group.

Since 2004, the Sheffield planning approach has continually responded to the changing political, economic and social context of the city. In this manner, the local authority and its partners have developed an approach that works specifically for the city of Sheffield. Other UK resettlement cities and towns have developed their own specific local approaches to planning for resettlement, based on local circumstances and needs.

The Sheffield resettlement stakeholder group follows an established planning cycle for each resettlement arrival.

6 weeks before arrival

Information about resettled refugees provided by Home Office, including:

- family & household composition
- age
- gender
- health status
- language(s) spoken

Refugee Council begins:

- researching the background of the arrival group
- recruiting interpreters
- establishing links with local community associations that share the ethnicity and/or language of the new client group

5 weeks before arrival

1st planning meeting:

All partners report their pre-arrival planning progress:

- **Local authority** – shares confirmed addresses for housing
- **Mulberry Practice** – highlight health needs that should be taken account of in pre-arrival planning
- **Refugee Council** – update on availability of interpreters and Week 1 reception calendar

3–4 weeks before arrival

2nd planning meeting:

- **Local authority** – confirms final housing and school placements for all resettled children
- **Mulberry Practice** – confirms pre-arrival registration with healthcare services local to refugees' new housing is underway

2 weeks before arrival

Refugee Council invites resettlement partners and other city stakeholders to a presentation about the culture and history of the refugees that are due to arrive into the city

1–2 weeks before arrival

Final planning meeting:

- **Refugee Council** – final arrivals day timetable and week 1 reception schedule

Interpreters

Resettled refugees often speak a minority language not widely present in Sheffield. Refugee Council works closely with migrant and refugee community organisations in the city and surrounding region, including those formed by previously resettled refugees, to recruit appropriately skilled individuals as interpreters for new refugee groups.

Interpreters are trained in interview skills, confidentiality and core technical vocabulary relating to employment, health and housing. Partners in the resettlement stakeholder group are able to 'hire' the interpreters recruited by Refugee Council as needed for their work with the resettled refugees, and Refugee Council provides a central booking and coordinating function for the 'hire' system.

Housing

On arrival in the UK, resettled refugees are housed directly in municipalities as independent tenants of rented accommodation, and entitlement to financial assistance for rental costs begins at the moment of arrival in the UK.

Locating housing for resettled refugees is the most crucial aspect of the resettlement planning process, and placement decisions are significantly influenced by the changing capacity of health and educational services in the city. Proximity to other refugee and migrant communities, places of worship and cultural amenities – such as shops selling specific foods – are also considered within the placement process.

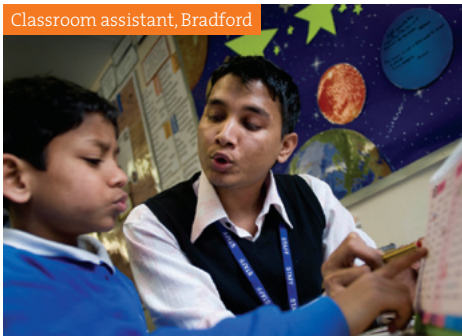
In Sheffield, the majority of available rental accommodation is in the private sector, and it is via this route that the local authority subsequently obtains the majority of accommodation for resettled refugees. It has developed long-standing relationships with a select group of private landlords across the city that ensure accommodation is of a high standard and landlords have become receptive to the needs of their new refugee tenants.

School education

In the UK, school education is compulsory for all children aged 5-16 years, and statutory nursery education is available for those aged 3-5 years. Generally, children will attend the school closest to their home. In some cases, through choice or where a local school is full, children may travel to another school within Sheffield.

The school education strand of the Sheffield resettlement programme is the responsibility of the local authority's mainstream service for children and young people. The education service provides up-to-date information on available school places within the city so that housing can be obtained nearby, and conducts pre-arrival briefings for receiving schools on the incoming refugee group. Resettled children and young people are registered at their new school two weeks ahead of their arrival into Sheffield so that they can start school as soon as possible after arrival.

Classroom assistant, Bradford



Rohingya child, Bradford



Health

The Mulberry Practice is a specialist medical practice that provides primary healthcare services to both asylum seekers and resettled refugees in Sheffield. Before refugees arrive, the practice schedules individual health assessments and registers all those due to arrive with the healthcare centre nearest to their allocated housing.

Long periods spent in camps or insecure situations can mean resettled refugees arrive with particular healthcare needs, some of which may require urgent attention. Refugees' health has already been assessed in the country of asylum to ensure that they are well enough to travel to the UK. The Home Office provides the medical reports to the Mulberry Practice 1-2 weeks prior to arrival – at this stage, the practice also begins planning for any immediate healthcare needs that may be present in the group on arrival.

Vocational training and language-learning

Some resettled refugees will arrive into Sheffield with basic English language skills, whilst others will have no knowledge of the language. Almost all will require some level of formal language training to improve their English.

In the UK, English language tuition for those from overseas is known as ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages), and is provided by a wide range of statutory, voluntary and other community-based organisations. There is no specific ESOL tuition provided as a core element of the Gateway programme, and resettled refugees instead access mainstream ESOL provision together with other newcomers in the UK.

Since ESOL demand generally outstrips supply in the UK, it can be challenging to obtain an ESOL place for resettled refugees. In the 5-6 weeks before arrival, Refugee Council liaises with ESOL providers in the city to place adult resettled refugees in ESOL classes. During the same period, the Home Office provides details of adult resettled refugees to the Sheffield office of JobCentre Plus (JCP), the national service that provides employment advice, support and access to vocational training.



Top tips

Planning the basics

- Ensure regular contact with your national government – keep informed about the groups they plan to resettle during the coming year
- Find out as much as you can, as early as you can, about the groups of refugees due to come to your locality
- Plan the availability of interpreters speaking the refugees' first language throughout the arrival and reception phase
- Locate housing for resettled refugees in areas where health services and schools have sufficient capacity and expertise
- Brief local stakeholders on refugee resettlement and the background and needs of the refugee due to arrive
- Put in place a detailed schedule for the first week after arrival

Arrival & reception: The first week in Sheffield

After leaving the country of asylum in which they may have stayed for many years, resettled refugees will often undertake long and arduous journeys to reach Sheffield. Although excited to start their new lives, they will arrive tired and disoriented, into a strange and unfamiliar context in which they are confronted with new weather, a new language, potentially unusual housing and a whole host of administrative tasks that must be completed shortly after their arrival.

The overall aim of the Gateway Protection Programme reception process is to ensure that refugees quickly feel confident in their ability to operate independently and safely within Sheffield, and begin to achieve a good understanding of the agencies that will be working with them over the year. Support for refugees during the reception process is led by Refugee Council, the specialist NGO integration support provider.

Socialising in Sheffield



Courtesy of the British Refugee Council

Refugee Council integration support staff work to build relationships of trust with resettled refugees, and to find ways to deliver information and support that is appropriate to their individual needs. It is also crucial that the initial reception phase begins the process of managing the sometimes unrealistic expectations that resettled refugees may have about their life in the UK.

The approach during the initial reception phase is to provide information gradually, taking account of the fact that many of the structures and agencies that the resettled refugee will come into contact with are entirely new to them. As such, the roles of the different agencies are outlined on a number of different occasions.

Even at this early stage, support is designed to encourage refugees to take control of their own affairs wherever possible. Great emphasis is placed on communicating the idea that the programme will give refugees as much support as possible, but that they are recognised as independent and adult people with varying levels of need. Of key importance is the ability to respond to urgent needs within this initial period and to reassure refugees about the ways in which complicated problems will be addressed over the coming months.

In Sheffield, the first week after arrival is highly planned, and designed to ensure the newly arrived refugees receive the support and information they need, both to adapt to their new environment and to access the services and assistance that will facilitate their long-term settlement in the UK.

The chart on the following page shows a typical schedule for the first week after resettled refugees are received by the city.

Day 1: Arrival

- Meet and greet at airport
- Accompanied transport to Sheffield
- Introductory briefing on programme (hot food provided)
- Refugees receive financial allowance for first 3 weeks in Sheffield
- Journey to allocated accommodation
- Introduction to housing by local authority housing staff – (using cooker, heating and hot water systems)
- Refugees provided with emergency contact telephone numbers for housing issues and translated information about the resettlement programme

Day 2

- Refugees met at houses by **Refugee Council** staff and shown around the area
- Accompanied orientation visit to Sheffield city centre, including introduction to local transport systems
- Individual health assessments at the **Mulberry Practice** (accompanied appointment)
- Refugees sign tenancy agreements with landlord/housing provider
- Refugees register for housing assistance at Sheffield office of Capita

Day 3

- **Refugee Council** follow up any urgent issues with individual refugees

Day 4

- Refugees attend employment assessments at Sheffield office of **JobCentre Plus** (accompanied appointments)

Day 5

Morning Welcome Meeting –

Refugee Council office in Sheffield

- Refugees receive full introduction to the programme and what they can expect over the first 12 months
- Local authority introduces their housing management service
- Resettled refugees visit one another's homes and/or attend further accompanied orientation visit to Sheffield city centre

Top tips

Arrival and reception

- Welcome resettled refugees directly at the airport
- Provide key information gradually, and repeat at different points in the reception phase
- Communicate to refugees what they can expect from the local resettlement programme and what is expected of them
- Make time in the reception schedule for refugees to visit one another in their new homes
- Introduce refugees to key local service providers, local transport systems and their immediate local area and city or town centre during the first week after arrival

Introducing...

Hull



Hull City Council

Kingston upon Hull, usually referred to simply as 'Hull', is a city of just less than 264,000 people located in the East Riding of Yorkshire in the UK. Hull is a port city, located where the River Hull meets the Humber Estuary, 25 miles inland from the North Sea.

Hull's economy historically centred around seafaring, trade and fishing. Although the fishing industry began to decline from the 1970s, the city's port handles millions of tonnes of freight every year. The retail and leisure sectors have also boosted the city's employment market, whilst the 23,000 students who attend Hull University contribute to the city's vibrant cultural and social life. After a period in which the city's population markedly declined – by 5.3% during the period 1991-2001 – numbers resident in Hull have now stabilised. Hull's location means it has always been a conduit for migrants travelling into and out of the UK.

From 1840, over 3 million mainly Baltic migrants fleeing persecution travelled through Hull on their way to the United States. Several Hull charities based in the Posterngate area of the city supported the migrants and, 160 years later in 2001, Posterngate again became a focus for migrants when the local authority chose to base its asylum and refugee service there.

This new service was established to support asylum seekers received by the city via the national asylum dispersal programme that began in 2001. Hull City Council took the decision to receive dispersed asylum seekers in response to the city's declining population and the resultant deterioration in the quality of housing in some areas of the city. The City Council considered that participating in the dispersal programme offered opportunities to boost the city's population, and revitalise and reinvigorate specific areas of the city.

In 2006, Hull City Council took the opportunity to build on the expertise developed through receiving asylum seekers by becoming involved in the Gateway Protection Programme. The local authority now works in partnership with Sheffield City Council and NGO partner Refugee Council to provide housing and a 12-month programme of integration support for refugees resettled to the city.

Refugee Week celebrations, Hull



Courtesy of Hull City Council

Hull's involvement in receiving asylum seekers and resettled refugees has led to the development of a flourishing voluntary sector. Several community-based organisations offer services and initiatives to encourage integration and promote social cohesion, including a library project to promote reading in different languages, and groups running friendship clubs and English classes.

A local City of Sanctuary movement was launched in Hull in 2010, which now works to make the city a place of safety and welcome for newcomers. Hull's continuing involvement in the Gateway Protection Programme offers an opportunity for the city to continue its historical commitment to maintaining and promoting human rights, for the next generation and into the future.

Introducing...

Eman & Michel



Before 2007, **Eman Eqab** was working for a bank in Baghdad. She was widowed shortly after the birth of her son. In 2007, her son was involved in an attempted kidnap outside his school. Eman and her son fled to Jordan, where they were reliant on financial support from relatives.

In Jordan, Eman was identified by UNHCR as a 'Woman at Risk' who could no longer remain in Jordan safely. In 2008, when Eman was 49 years old, she and her son were resettled to Hull. After their arrival, Eman studied English and began volunteering with a local drop-in centre for homeless asylum seekers. Since 2009, Eman has been working part-time and volunteering with the Refugee Council resettlement team.



Eman says *'Welcome and arrival is a very important phase in resettlement, and it is crucial that resettled refugees are introduced to their neighbours. Schools should provide teachers that speak the children's language or volunteers to support them in the first few weeks at school. In the first year of my resettlement I didn't integrate at all because I was scared of the host community and felt they were scared of me. This is the reason why I began volunteering – because I needed to learn the ways of my host community as well as make new friends. Now, I want a very good future for my son. I want him to be part of the community, but also to have good behaviour to reflect his background. I want him to succeed in his studies and to be happy'*.

Michel Mushota is 40 years old, and originally from the Congo. He has a wife and 4 children. After fleeing civil war for a second time in 1998, Michael met his wife in Mporokoso refugee camp in Zambia. Life in the camp was very difficult, and they were forced to relocate to Kara refugee camp, also in Zambia.

Despite being in Zambia legally, Michel was arrested on a number of occasions when he left to look for work. The ongoing war in Congo meant they could not return there.

In 2006, Michel and his wife were resettled to Hull. Michel says, *'Before leaving Zambia, I was told that I would live in a peaceful place with no discrimination because I'm a refugee. I was worried about language, but was told I'd have a project worker to help me get to places, find college to learn English, how to live in houses with toilets inside them and so on. This was very reassuring.*

As I stepped off the plane I could just smell safety. My second thought was the weather! It was VERY cold. I was scared of speaking to people in case I said something that was offensive. I was even scared to talk to my neighbours.

I've completed a lot of training courses so that my skills can be recognised and used here. For cities considering resettlement, I would say providing English language tuition is the most important thing. Then provide training so that people can adapt their skills to the local job market, and have an organisation like the Refugee Council that can really make people feel welcome.

My hope for the future is to have a secure job in a UK company. For my children and family, I just want them to be safe, with a bright future'.

Laying the foundations for integration: The first 12 months

Each resettled refugee is different, and will arrive into Sheffield with different needs, vulnerabilities, skills and aspirations. Whilst all resettled refugees have the capacity to become fully participating and contributing Sheffield citizens, many will make only partial progress toward this status within the first year of residency in the UK. Within the Gateway integration support programme, Refugee Council aims to provide flexible support and interventions that meet the requirements of each individual refugee, with the overall aim of providing them with the tools, skills and knowledge to facilitate their long-term integration beyond the first year of residence in the city.

To open up integration opportunities for resettled refugees within the first 12 months, Refugee Council draws on the knowledge and expertise of previously resettled refugees, volunteers from host communities, and voluntary and statutory stakeholder organisations in Sheffield.

Drop-in advice, Bradford



Courtesy of Horton Housing Association, Bradford

The aim of the programme after 12 months is that resettled refugees are able to access mainstream services and participate to some degree in their local communities, and that they have developed links – formally or informally – within the Sheffield community.

Refugee Council's support services are delivered in 3 key phases:

Months 1-3

- High level of support and assistance to access services

Months 4-9

- Reduced levels of direct support
- Encouragement and assistance to live independently

Months 10-12

- Low level of support
- Preparation for end of the Gateway integration support programme

Personal Integration Plans

The Personal Integration Plan (PIP) is the central tool for the delivery of specialist integration support for refugees. During the second week after arrival, Refugee Council's integration support staff conduct initial assessments with each resettled refugee, and the PIP is completed during the first few weeks.

The PIP determines specific areas of interest or concern with which refugees require support, and enables individual refugees to give voice to their wishes. It also begins a dialogue between refugees and Refugee Council staff about the best ways to progress during the following months. Key areas of analysis in the PIP are housing, income and finance, education and training, health and wellbeing, employment and volunteering. The PIP isolates areas of concern that merit more intensive work, and Refugee Council staff are highly involved with guiding and suggesting ideas and actions to refugees at this stage.

The initial PIP assessment also marks the beginning of the process of connecting resettled refugees with existing refugee and migrant community organisations in the city that share their ethnicity and/or language.

Advice and support

During the first 3-4 weeks, refugees will sometimes be visited in their own homes, but are also encouraged to attend twice-weekly drop-in advice services as issues arise. Home visits will only take place in exceptional circumstances after the first month. All resettled refugees are invited to a personal appointment at least once a month to discuss how they are progressing.

During the first 3 months, Refugee Council provides refugees with intensive support focused on meeting essential needs and developing an understanding of the key relationships relating to their life in Sheffield. Within the first 3 months, refugees can attend a series of weekly structured group briefings on important areas of information about life in the UK, including employment, welfare benefits, child protection and domestic violence.

Over the next 6 months, resettled refugees are still offered regular appointments to discuss their progress, but the expectation that they will now require far less support to undertake essential tasks and resolve any difficulties is clearly communicated. By this stage, most of the resettled refugees are making good progress, which enables resources to be targeted toward intensive support for those finding it harder to live independently. Typical areas where greater assistance is required might include household budgeting and managing the payment of bills. One of the most common areas for which resettled refugees request assistance is applying for family reunification.

The final 3 months of the programme are oriented toward reducing support ahead of the end of the Gateway support programme. Individual appointments each month are no longer routinely offered, and refugees are asked to contact Refugee Council to arrange an appointment only if they require assistance. Refugees with significant ongoing needs will continue to be monitored by staff. All refugees continue to have access to the drop-in service over the final 3 months, and can make individual appointments if they wish.

Building bridges: volunteering and community development

For resettled refugees, the process of settling into a new society and local area in which they have no pre-existing connections or relationships can be extremely challenging. Opportunities for resettled refugees to build relationships with those from the local community can help them to develop social networks outside of their immediate community and enhance their understanding of UK culture and values. Local citizens can also enhance resettlement programmes by using their expertise and experience to assist resettled refugees with specific areas of interest or need and – in doing so – can learn more about the new citizens that have joined them in their locality.

In Sheffield, Refugee Council recruits and trains volunteers from the local population to act in defined roles and positions within the Gateway programme. Volunteers are recruited directly from amongst students at Sheffield's two universities and previously resettled refugees, and from the general public via the organisation's website, and seven individuals currently offer their time within the local resettlement programme.

Volunteer roles include introducing refugees to recreational activities, providing opportunities to practice conversational English and mentoring refugee young people. Gateway volunteers also travel to schools and community venues to talk about refugees and resettlement, often accompanied by previously resettled refugees.

To strengthen refugee communities themselves, Refugee Council provides a dedicated community development service. The aim of the service is to allow resettled refugees to maintain links to their own culture and heritage, whilst also creating and developing sustainable links to the Sheffield community.

Refugee Council has supported resettled refugees to develop specific projects, such as starting a football team and a women's support group, and to hold events to celebrate cultural, national and religious occasions. Some resettled refugees in Sheffield have also been supported to form independent community associations, which have enabled the views and interests of resettled refugees to be represented within local debates and dialogues.

Education

Resettled refugee families with children arriving into Sheffield are generally unfamiliar with the UK educational system, and may speak little or no English. Parents can therefore find it challenging to engage with their children's schooling and support them in their education. Additionally, both refugee children and their parents may have little or no experience of formal education and/or have extremely high expectations about schooling in the UK.

To support both families and schools, the local authority children's service employs a part-time education coordinator and family school liaison officer within the Gateway programme. In the second week after arrival, they meet with refugee parents to explain the UK educational system and school admission process, and advise them about the school that their children will be attending.

Rohingya women in the Yorkshire Dales

Courtesy of Horton Housing Association, Bradford



Within the first 12 months, the Gateway programme supports schools receiving resettled refugee pupils to employ language-specific teaching assistants who support resettled children to settle into school and improve their English language skills. A number of previously resettled refugees have been recruited to these positions as the programme has progressed in the city.

Top tips

The first 12 months

- Talk to resettled refugees about their aspirations for resettlement and where they anticipate needing support
- Tailor support to meet the individual needs of resettled refugees – use individual integration plans co-developed with refugees
- Manage refugee expectations – provide honest and realistic advice and information about life in the resettlement country
- Promote self-reliance and independence throughout service delivery for resettled refugees
- Make use of previously resettled refugees and volunteers from the wider local population in the delivery of local resettlement programmes

Introducing... Bradford



The city of Bradford is located at the foot of the Pennine mountain range in West Yorkshire. With a population of just over 512,000, it is the fourth largest metropolitan district in England, and the fifth largest in the UK. Bradford is a diverse and cosmopolitan city, in which 28% of residents identify themselves as being from a minority ethnic background.

The city has a long tradition of receiving migrant communities, particularly those from Eastern Europe and South Asia, and modern-day Bradford has a resultantly rich heritage of traditions and cultures. Migrants have been drawn to Bradford for a wide variety of reasons, as economic migrants, to join family members and as refugees.

In 2001, the local authority in Bradford sought to build on this long tradition by electing to receive asylum seekers in the city as part of the national asylum dispersal programme.

The positive experiences of Bradford in receiving asylum seekers, and the local expertise and skills that developed in the city as a result, led directly to the 2008 decision to receive resettled refugees.

Bradford's involvement in the Gateway Protection Programme has demonstrated how collaborative working and effective partnerships between different agencies working in the city can deliver a successful local resettlement programme. A partnership of Bradford City Council, statutory health and education services and Horton Housing Association – a specialist local housing and support organisation – has to date successfully resettled 302 refugees. The majority are Rohingya refugees originally from Burma but who have been living in Bangladesh for many years. More recently, the city has received groups of Somali and Bhutanese refugees. Bradford will continue to provide safety and security for 100 refugees per year during the 2011-14 programme, and the city looks forward to welcoming many new citizens in the future. Resettlement has been a positive experience for Bradford, particularly in terms of the contributions that resettled refugee communities have made to the city.

Rohingya refugees relaxing, Bradford



Courtesy of Horton Housing Association, Bradford

The 12-month integration support programme ensures that resettled refugees are equipped with the necessary skills and capacity to live, work and participate in the life of the city beyond the initial support period and for many years to come. Many have become actively involved as volunteers in the resettlement of subsequent groups, and several are employed as interpreters and teaching assistants within the wider programme.

In 2010, and as a result of the city's successes in receiving asylum seekers and resettled refugees, the city of Bradford was recognised as a City of Sanctuary.

Introducing...

Abdul & Mohammed



Abdul Haque is a Rohingya refugee, originally from Burma. Abdul was resettled to Bradford with his family in 2008. He is 34 years old.

The Rohingya are not recognised as citizens of the country by the Burmese government and are often persecuted. In 1991, these circumstances compelled Abdul and his family to flee to Bangladesh. The camps were very basic. However, Abdul managed to attend English language classes, and in 1997 began working with several international organisations. He gathered over 10 years experience of community work, specialising in youth work, domestic violence, early marriages, family-planning and HIV services.



Abdul and his family arrived into Bradford in 2008. Abdul says, *'Now I can say I have got security for life, and educational facilities and opportunities for me and for my children. My children are going to school and doing very well. When I first arrived I felt upset because I didn't know English very well, but in 2010 I went to Bradford College and I passed English Language Entry Level 2 last year. Life is good but sometimes I still get upset. My parents, brothers and sisters are still in the Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh – I was there with them for 18 years in those horrible situations, and I miss them all the time. I have been in the UK more than 3 years now. I cannot believe how our lives have changed. I have a job, and I am helping other refugees to settle in Bradford. Most of the time I feel very happy'*.

Mohammed Abdi Shakut is 30 years old and originally from Somalia. Mohammed's mother died when he was very young, and he was taken to live with his half-brother Abdi. In 1991, when Mohammed was 10 years old, members of another clan attacked the village where he and his brother lived and Mohammed was injured, losing an eye. Fear of further attacks led Mohammed and Abdi to flee Somalia and seek refuge in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya.

Life in the camp was difficult and conditions were very hard. Initially, Mohammed and his brother planned to return to Somalia as soon as conditions were safe enough for them to do so. After 18 years in what was intended to be a temporary refugee camp, it became clear that this was not an option for their long-term future.

During his time in the camp, Mohammed managed to attend school and learned to speak English. He worked with several NGOs and as a primary school teacher. When the opportunity to be resettled arose, it was a difficult decision, but they eventually decided to be resettled arrived into Bradford into February 2012. Mohammed says, *'We were met at the airport by Horton Housing Association and taken to Bradford. Immediately we were assessed for our levels of English and asked about our plans for the future. With the help of my support workers and their colleagues in education, I was given the opportunity to work as a classroom assistant working with Somali children. I've been here for only 2 months, and already I cannot believe all the changes that have taken place in my life'*.

Supporting refugee resettlement: A role for the media



Local and regional media can significantly influence public opinion about refugees. Whilst European economic and political circumstances can sometimes make reporting refugee issues challenging, positive coverage of local resettlement programmes can help to create supportive communities ready to welcome resettled refugees.

Since 2004, the Sheffield resettlement partnership has successfully worked with local media to increase public awareness of refugee resettlement, and to introduce some of the refugees resettled to the city to the wider Sheffield public.

Top tips

Resettlement and the media

- Start early – put in place a media strategy for refugee resettlement before resettled refugees arrive
- Prepare your contacts – identify knowledgeable spokespeople prepared to speak to local media about resettlement. Where possible, include previously resettled refugees
- Build media awareness – provide information about refugee resettlement, your local resettlement programme and the refugees due to be received into your locality. Use press packs and briefings, and schedule press releases
- Develop some compelling case studies – draw together some written stories, or find out if some of the refugees are willing to share their story as a way of raising awareness of their journey and arrival
- Target sympathetic media – build local media contacts with a history of positive coverage of refugee issues

Beyond 12 months: The journey to citizenship

The development of resettled refugees from Sheffield newcomers to active, integrated and participating Sheffield citizens is a long-term process. The aim of the Gateway Protection Programme in the first 12 months is to provide resettled refugees with the tools, knowledge and contacts to support their path toward citizenship in subsequent years.

Whilst many resettled refugees will be in a position to move forward independently after 12 months, more vulnerable refugees may require ongoing support from mainstream service providers in Sheffield³. Refugee Council has developed strong links with a range of agencies in the city that can provide ongoing support for resettled refugees, including health services, housing support specialists and refugee community organisations. To prevent any setbacks in individual refugees' progress toward living independently, referrals to mainstream services are made 1-2 months prior to the end of the 12-month Gateway programme.

Long-term outcomes for refugees resettled to Sheffield clearly demonstrate how those arriving into the city directly from often lengthy periods of residency in highly insecure and traumatic situations can flourish in their new community. Employment remains a key challenge and – in recognition of the difficulties faced by many resettled refugees – it has been proposed that targeted support focused on training and employment should extend beyond the initial 12-month period for all refugees.

The first group of resettled Liberian refugees received by the city of Sheffield had lived in refugee camps for up to 20 years, many having been born there, and arrived into Sheffield with little experience of formal education, low levels of literacy and only minimal English language skills. Their health was generally poor, and many had experienced high levels of trauma and violence.

Eight years later, many of the refugees are in university or have completed degrees. Others have gained vocational qualifications, and many are in permanent work and/or volunteer within their local communities.

Almost all of the group have applied to be naturalised as UK citizens, and the Liberian community in Sheffield continues to make a significant contribution to the city's cultural, political and social life. Whilst these outcomes were not yet visible at the end of the initial 12 months of the Gateway Protection Programme, it is clear the support they received at the outset of their resettlement to the city made their journey to citizenship a successful one.

As resettled refugees of different backgrounds are received by the city each year to begin the process of developing and thriving as Sheffield citizens, the benefits of the city's involvement in refugee resettlement will continue to be felt, by the city and its partners, by the Sheffield population and – most importantly – by resettled refugees themselves.



Akoi Bazzie, resettled to Sheffield in 2004,
Yorkshire & Humber Refugee of the Year finalist 2009.

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- ¹ (p8) Sheffield European Refugee Fund:
http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/h4567_en.htm
- ² (p8) Joint EU Resettlement Programme:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20120328IPR42048/html/Financial-incentives-for-EU-countries-to-take-up-more-refugees>
- ³ (p32) An Evaluation of the Gateway Protection Programme: A Report Commissioned by the Home Office (2011)
Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University

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