

Integration works: the role of organisations in refugee integration in Yorkshire and Humber

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Aims

The aim of this research was to inform statutory organisations and others to better understand and respond to the needs, challenges and successes of organisations working on refugee integration. It also aims to help the organisations who participated in this research to improve their knowledge of the sector as a whole and learn from each other.

Methodology

Between June 2019 and August 2022 the researchers conducted 92 semi-structured interviews, engaging with 117 respondents in total, representing various organisations from across Yorkshire and Humber. The research consulted representatives from refugees voluntary and community sector (20%), general voluntary and community sector (15%), public authority officers (14%), and various other organisations (52%) from sectors such as arts, culture and heritage, education, faith-based organisations, housing, media, police, transport, and so on. The research suggests these have an important, if often overlooked, role in integration.

Key issues

In addition to providing an overview of the policy landscape the report has four main sections:

- Doing integration – categorises different integration activities in which organisations are involved along three areas of work: 1. activities with focus on social relations – for example creating opportunities for people to develop meaningful relationships in whatever environment; 2. activities with focus on knowledge and skills – this can include for example ‘orientation’ advice, or support around finding employment; 3. and activities that aim to ensure equality when it comes to access to public - and some commercial - services. This included access to GP, support with move-on period, as well as access to welfare. This section also discusses the work of organisation that are often ‘overlooked’ such as universities, art, culture and heritage organisations, housing, and media organisations, as well as the role of employers in ‘doing’ integration. While some of these, such as arts, and heritage organisations, or universities, see themselves as having a role to play in integration and are motivated by their organisational values, others, such as housing associations,

appear to struggle to understand the full role they could play in integration.

- Governing integration – suggests that in the eyes of organisations the area of refugee integration is mostly marked by lack of policy and strategic direction. What guides their ‘integration work’ mostly relates to national government’s ‘hostile environment’. This however was not seen to be a challenge as majority of respondents did not think policy was relevant to their day-to-day work. The findings suggest there was some ‘appetite’ for regional leadership which can provide unified regional voice.
- Evaluating integration – explores the challenges faced by the organisations when it comes to refugee integration, and how these have been addressed. These challenges include supporting refugees into paid work, and particularly the kind that would match their skills and qualifications as well as access to formal ESOL classes. Despite employment and language skills being identified as crucial to integration there is not enough support and provision in these fields. Additionally, the research shows that some public service provision was lacking when it came to support provision. Another activity organisations engaged in was improving social relations between refugees and longer-standing residents.
- Assembling integration – focuses on broader issues that are shaping and together ‘assembling’ refugee integration across different sectors. It suggests that resettlement schemes, such as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), are usually seen as the most effective in responding to refugees’ needs, as they provide tailored one to one model of support. While this personalised, rights-based way of working within the contexts of housing, education, employment and health might be seen as the most effective approach, its delivery was often hindered by shortage of resources. A lack of engagement around refugee integration at senior levels within organisations whose primary focus did not relate to refugees, such as universities, has been identified as a challenge.

Conclusion

The research shows that overall organisations involved in refugee integration in Yorkshire and the Humber often demonstrate creativity and motivation, particularly in the voluntary sector. This research departs from an assumption that there is a lot of knowledge about the experiences of refugees, and a lot of data about the work done by various international organisations that deal with questions of migration and border enforcement, but that there is not enough knowledge on the experiences of organisations in the middle, those that work on regional and local levels, and that that tend to do the everyday work of supporting refugee integration. As such, it aimed to fill this gap by informing statutory organisations and others to better understand and respond to the needs, challenges and successes of organisations working on refugee integration.

Web Link

<https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/integration-works-the-role-of-organisati...>

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Refugees

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Community cohesion

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