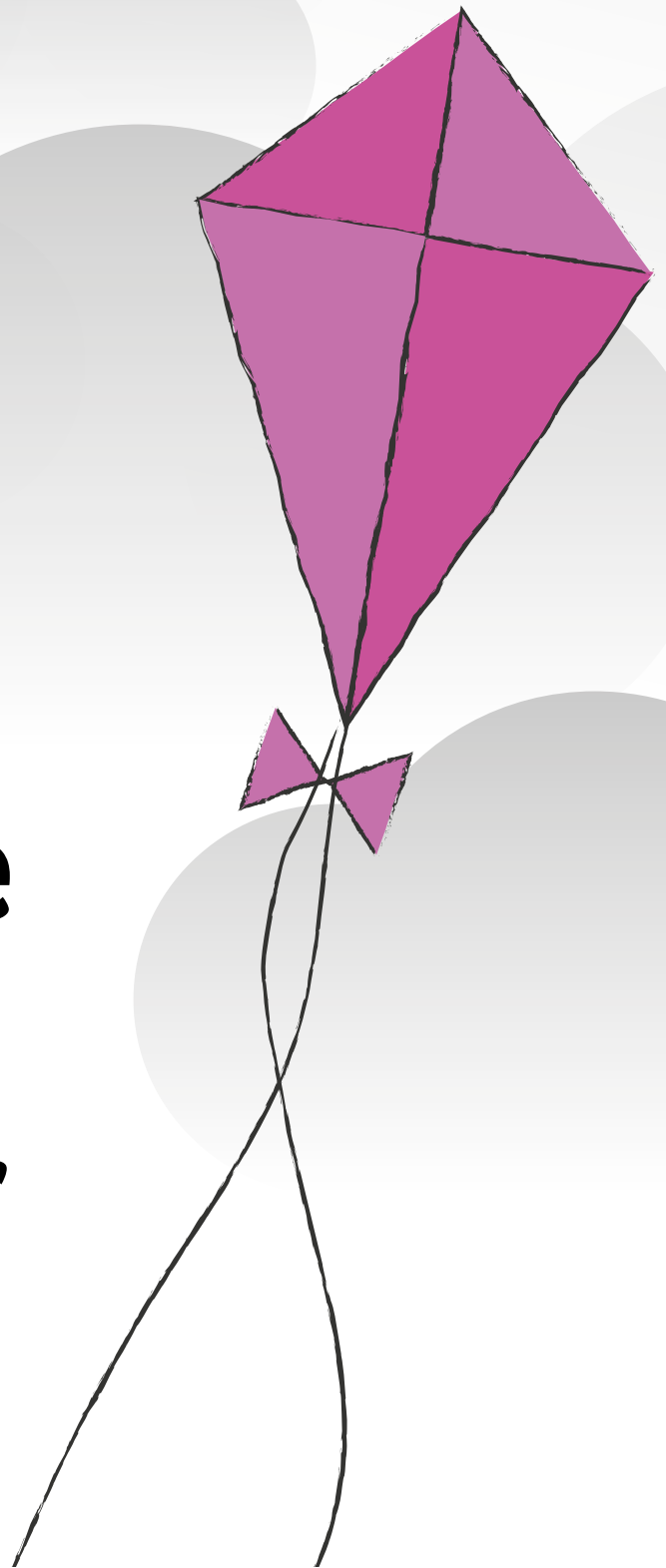


Living the weathers and other stories



Refugee Integration
Yorkshire and Humber



This project is co-funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Making management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union.

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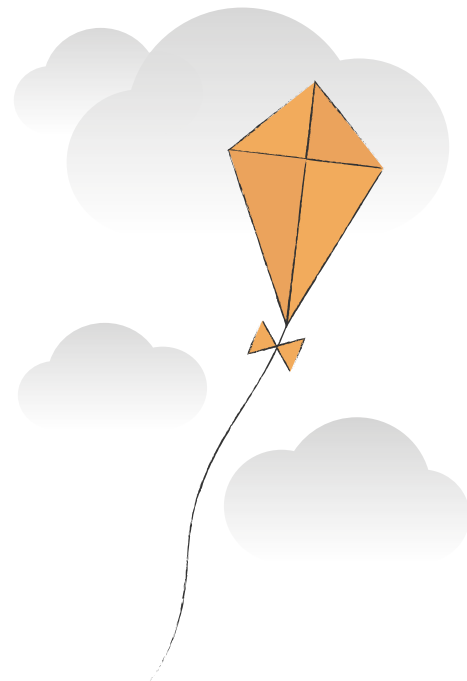
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Summary

‘Living the weathers and other stories’ looks at the experiences of people who live in Yorkshire and Humber and who were granted refugee protection at some point in their life in the UK. It aims to contribute to existing research surrounding the broad term of ‘integration’. In addition to what we call ‘practical settled-ness’, it examines what seems to be at times an overlooked aspect of integration, emotional settled-ness: what makes and where do people *feel* emotionally at ease. How people feel emotionally settled cannot be quantified or measured, as perhaps some other aspects of integration could be. Rather, the report suggests that in order to look at the emotional aspect of integration, we need to take into account the experiences, practices and connections people have in other places and in other times, that go beyond the ‘here’ (UK context) and ‘now’ (present day). This enables us to consider individuals’ past lives, present connections and aspirations - their relationships, skills, knowledge, education, hopes for a good life - more attentively, and to contextualise these with present experiences in the UK and with the integration process.

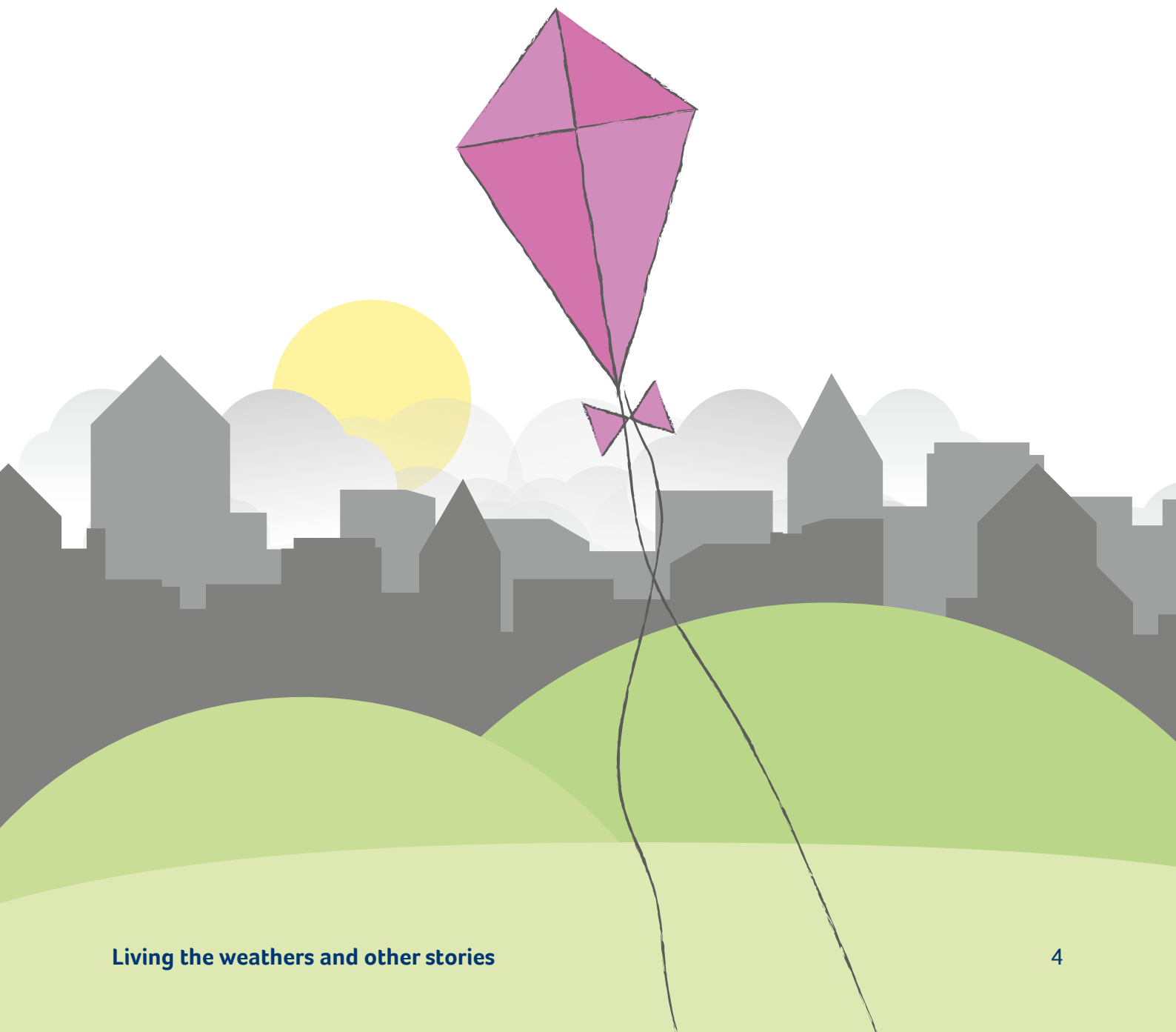
The report has three main sections and several response pieces which aim to raise questions and pose some reflections. The first section, ‘Living the weathers, integration and social relationships’, reveals how the weather permeates living in the UK, both in a very mundane *practical* way of what can and cannot be done, and how; and *emotionally* through evoking connections to diverse places and times. This section suggests that people who arrived in the UK from other geopolitical contexts always *lived a variety of weathers*: the UK weather, as well as other weathers – those of the places where they spent much of their lives. What this means is that research participants always had affinities to other places, and other people, and things of all kinds, and that their experiences cannot be considered merely in terms of the here and now: life as it is in the UK.

The second section, ‘On being a refugee’, complicates the ‘refugee category’. We conceptualise of the refugee category through two main domains: the legal domain and the social domain. For many people without personal experience of being labelled ‘refugees’, this category is a matter of legality: the rights and responsibilities as defined in law (e.g. who is entitled and how, where they can be, and for how long). While matters of legality are crucial, they are not the focus of our inquiry. Rather, we bring to the reader’s attention how the legal categories associated with ‘refugees’ shape day-to-day lives as experienced by the people they label and speak of. We suggest it does so both practically and emotionally, impacting their everyday practices, opportunities, engagements, self-esteem and sense of belonging. While the legal category potentially generates opportunities, allowing people to start a new life in a new country, people who are called refugees can also see themselves as unable to resume their lives. As a consequence, they may feel stuck. As Declan, one of the 51 people we interviewed, told us ‘refugees are people unable to practice their craft’. Not being able to practice one’s craft



meant the refugee label often creates a person with a particular – often unenviable – past, and therefore with a specific future – often with limited opportunities.

The third section, ‘Settlement strategies’, identifies some specific places that are significant for people’s day-to-day lives. The places our research participants mentioned most often were those that enabled engagement in positive activities that could be seen as settlement strategies for starting life in a new country. What made people feel more settled, or more ‘at home’ in the new country, was facilitated *in* and *through* a specific place (e.g. a community centre, a workplace, or a library) which provided access to people’s needs and wants, and maximised four key ‘feelings’: security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility or hope. We grouped places into three categories, according to the particular activities they enable: know-how places; places of familiarity; and hope-enabling places. However, we note that many of the places people talked about could fit into more than one category. Understanding what kind of places were important to our research participants could be significant for integration processes.



1. About this (weather) report

Background and purpose

Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber (RIYH) is a project supporting new refugees, communities and public services to work with and benefit from each other. The aim of the RIYH project is to improve the integration of refugees in Yorkshire and Humber through a 'whole-region' approach, coordinating strategic and operational interventions underpinned by comprehensive evidence and refugee participation. In a nutshell, our ambition is to create a more integrated Yorkshire and Humber and to benefit communities beyond the lifetime of the project. Migration Yorkshire is the lead partner managing RIYH, which is delivered across the region through a partnership of organisations.

'Living the weathers and other stories' is the second research output from the RIYH project. As a research partnership for this project - between Migration Yorkshire, a group of peer researchers, the University of Huddersfield, and the University of Salford - we aspired to produce rigorous and meaningful research with refugees and organisations that would contribute to a solid evidence base underpinning our regional strategic approach to the integration between refugees and local communities. We hope that it also proves applicable to local areas and other parts of the UK when, for example, services conduct needs assessments, seek to improve existing service delivery and consider future funding applications.

'Living the weathers and other stories' covers the part of the RIYH research that sought to understand how people with experience of being refugees settle into everyday life in their new communities in Yorkshire and Humber. A key part of our approach in this second piece of research was to work with a group of peer researchers who themselves have had experience of being refugees. They contributed to the design, data collection and analysis of this research; further details are provided in the methodology section.

Colleagues at the University of Huddersfield and the University of Salford have produced a sister report '[Integration Works](#)' that focuses on the role of organisations in supporting refugee integration in our region.



Structure of the report and associated outputs

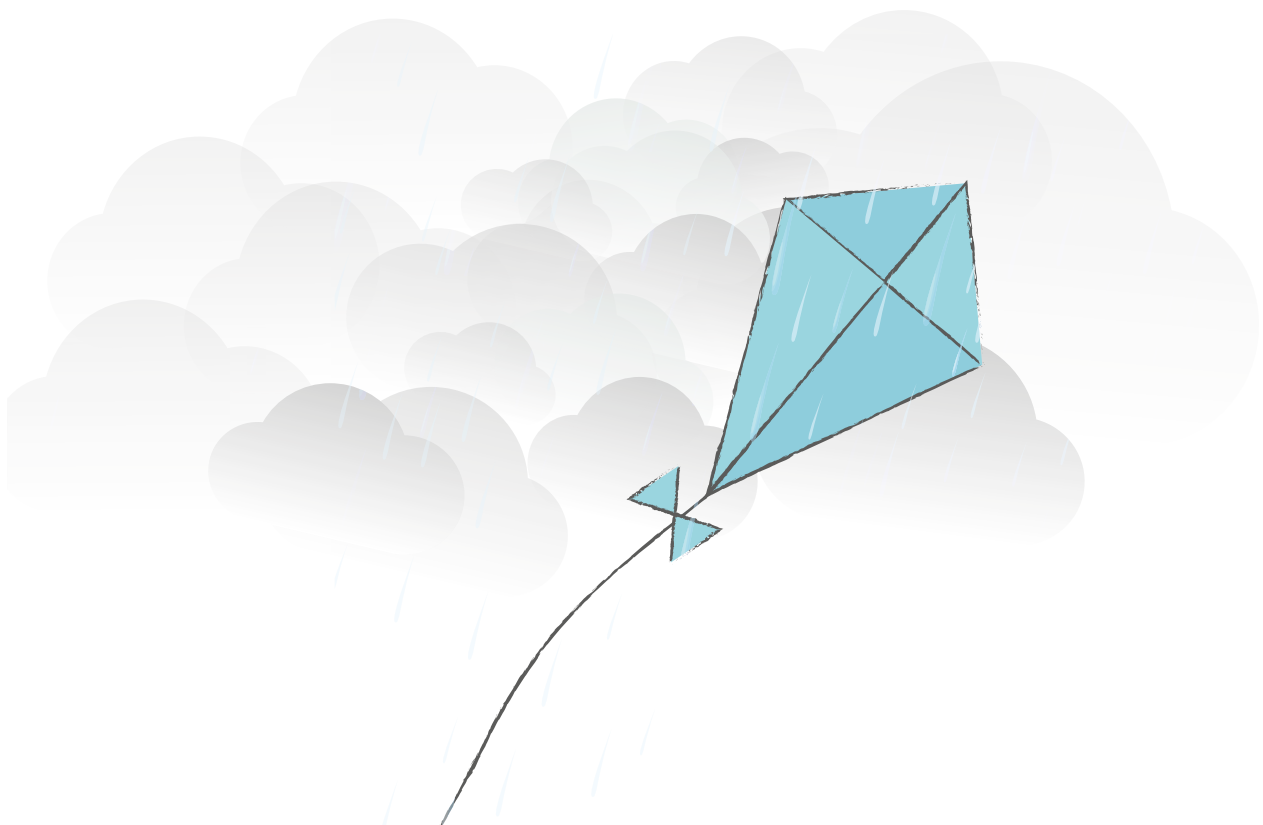
The report is divided into three main areas: introducing the concepts of ‘emotional settled-ness’ and ‘living the weathers’ in a context of social integration; the impact of the immigration status and label ‘refugee’; and, strategies that people with a refugee background identified as helping them to settle into Yorkshire and Humber.

The research findings are structured in a way that is intended to encourage a type of dialogue with the reader. Each findings section (written by the lead author) is followed by a short commentary (by a different writer) reflecting on some of the issues raised and how that might raise questions or practical implications for people, communities and services with residents of a refugee background.

The appendix presents further sets of direct quotations from research participants on three matters: their thoughts about the word ‘refugee’, their thoughts about the word ‘integration’ and detailed descriptions of places in Yorkshire and Humber that are meaningful to them.

A rich array of material was gathered during this project. In the near future we are planning to share some complementary outputs:

- A booklet of drawings created by our research participants during the course of their interviews.
- The research instruments we developed for this project as part of a developing collection of research tools that we want to share with other migration researchers.
- A practical toolkit that builds on our experience of working with migrant researchers during this project.



2. Introduction: on practical and emotional settled-ness

‘...emotionally, you know, I don’t advise it [to come to the UK]...Because you know back home people used to think it is easy to find a job. You can work and you can have your life back... [people] don’t want to be always helped...being helped all the time, it doesn’t give freedom...I came for safety...ok I am safe and with my family, but at the same time I can’t have that life here [life I used to have]...I don’t want them [my friends and relatives] to come and expect they can work and have their life here’.

Interview with Mazaa

Mazaa surprised us when we asked her what kind of advice on starting life in the UK she would give to relative or a friend, if they were to come here. Throughout most of the interview, she seemed content, even happy, with many aspects of her life in Huddersfield. Therefore, we did not quite expect her to advise friends and family against coming here. While feeling safe, Mazaa did not feel settled emotionally. Feeling settled emotionally in their new homes featured, in one way or another, in many conversations we had with people who were granted refugee protection in the UK. Therefore, in this report we would like to propose that, when thinking about ‘integration’, it is important to consider various aspects that we group within two intertwined domains that inform and shape each other:

- Practical settled-ness
- Emotional settled-ness

The first domain is very concrete. It is embedded in the present and reveals something about how people live their daily lives in their new country. Being practically settled includes various aspects - such as employment, education, healthcare, housing, social relationships, language acquisition, and so on – many which are considered in strategies and policies on integration.

We suggest that these aspects of daily lives are informed by another domain, perhaps less tangible, which we call emotional settled-ness. While the emotional domain may inform one’s daily life in the UK, and thus practical settled-ness, it draws its force from a myriad of experiences and aspirations, some of which are located in different temporalities and different places. In other words, how an individual felt about their new life in the UK was shaped by ‘affinities’ (Mason 2018) they had in other places (e.g. places where they spent much of their lives) and other times (e.g. what kind of life they had prior to arriving here, and what kind of life they hoped they would have now they are here). Mason defines affinities as ‘potent connections’ that feel ‘kindred’ in some way, or make things ‘kindred’ even if they do not involve a family or kinship link; and even when they are not only between people, but connections to places, things, environments, smells and so on (2018: 1). This point is significant if we are to understand some of the components embedded in the process of integration from the point of view of our research participants.

The broader project this research is part of is called Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber [RIYH]. One of our aims was to understand something about how our research participants – individuals who live in Yorkshire and Humber and who at some point in their life in the UK were granted refugee protection – understood both of these concepts: ‘refugee’ and ‘integration’. We recognise that both are neither straightforward nor unproblematic. Our research illustrates

that the language we use matters as it sturdily shapes experiences, practices and opportunities. For people we talked to both of these concepts ‘refugee’ and ‘integration’ seemed to be in everything and everywhere. But there was an important difference: ‘refugee’ seemed more immediate, and more personal. As such it evoked some very complex reactions amongst our research participants (see table in the appendix). In contrast to this, ‘integration’ was more abstract. Many of those we talked to were not familiar with the concept. However, those that were familiar, ‘generally speaking considered the *idea* of integration positively even when they thought that in practice it was not easily achievable (see the table in the appendix). Most of the time people talked about processes of integration and various experiences embedded in it in diverse, even if less direct, ways. Since our writing was very much led by our findings, also the structure of this report was defined by it. Therefore, we elaborate on intricacies embedded in the refugee category in one section, while we discuss processes of integration throughout the report.

When we consider the integration of diverse migrant communities, sometimes the way we tend to ask questions, think, write and analyse it is through divided sectors such as education, employment, social relationships, well-being, health, housing and so on. This is important if we seek to understand integration in relation to, or within, a particular sector. In this research, however, we wanted to hear what kind of themes or issues emerged and mattered from ‘the bottom’, and in a less structured way. So for example, instead of asking directly about education, employment or housing, we asked about places that mattered in day-to-day life, about things that were a surprise upon arrival, or we asked people to draw how they felt about their lives in the UK. This way people could tell us about employment if, and when, they wanted to, even if the question was not directly designed around it. However, it also enabled them to tell us about matters that we would not necessarily consider asking about, such as the weather, but that were clearly important for processes of integration and how they understood it.

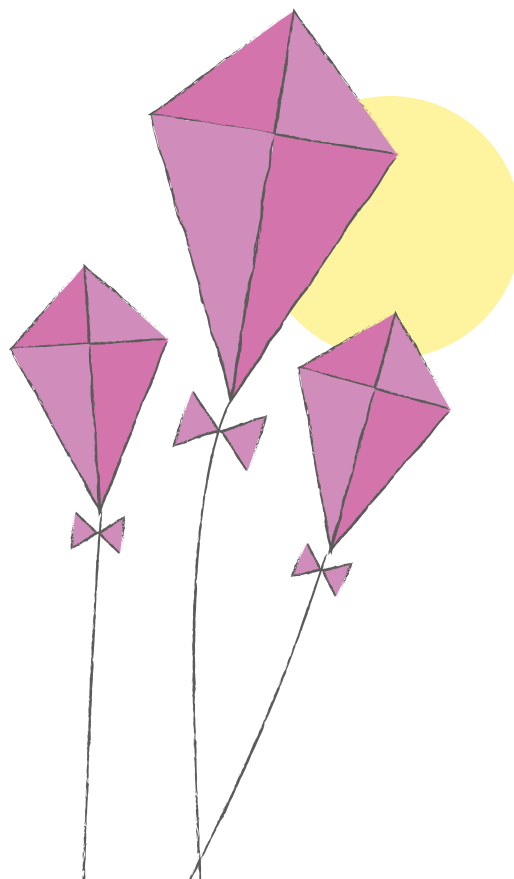
Furthermore, in our research we wanted to remain open towards stories and experiences that went beyond here and now, life as it is in the UK. We noticed when people talked about aspirations and expectations, connections and responsibilities embedded in other places, as well as their daily lives from before. We suggest that these could be considered more when thinking about integration. People told us, for example, that when and if their pasts were considered, there often was a tendency to reduce their previous experiences to stories of persecution, despair, calamity and suffering, while ignoring those of previous success, prosperity, happiness and joy. The latter do not seem to fit the image of ‘the refugee’. While it is true that people we talked to have been through very unenviable experiences (otherwise they would not be here seeking refugee protection), not all of their previous experiences were like that. This is what Mazaa was telling us when she said she hoped that she would be able to have ‘her life back’ here.

While *having your life back* necessarily means different things for different people, it suggests that we should look at hopes and experiences of life in the UK always relationally: both in a temporal sense – relating to different times – and in a spatial sense - relating to different places. In a temporal sense, having *your life back* is about hoping and aspiring to incorporate *some* aspects of a previous life, enabling a sense of familiarity, independence and/or accomplishment, while eliminating other aspects that forced someone to flee. All this is geared towards having a better future.

In a spatial sense, for the people we spoke to, having your life back related to their expectations from the new place. These were most commonly followed by an - often shocking - realisation of the immense discrepancies between their expectations and the realities on the ground. When people told us how surprised they were by, for instance, social customs, values, food, gender

roles, relationships, environment, weather and so on, it was always in relation to places they had already been to and lived in, and subsequent ideas and anticipations of new places.

Going back to the interview with Mazaa, she told us that prior to arriving in the UK she ran a children's day care business through which she provided employment for two people. In her private life she had lots of support from, and plenty of responsibilities towards, family members and friends. Having had this kind of employment and social status made her feel she had a choice in terms of her and her family's lifestyle: she chose how she wanted to spend her time, where, and with whom she wanted her children to play. She recalls taking many of her daily life experiences for granted. In the UK, however, she was unemployed and most of her previous sense of choice was gone. While she felt she had established new social relations here, she told us that she was always grateful and appreciative if someone came for a visit or invited her family over. When Mazaa told us, somewhat disappointedly, about her realisation that she could not have her life back in the UK, in terms of employment, for example, it directly related to what kind of life and employment (and resulting sense of choice and independence) she had in the past, as well as what kind of expectation and aspiration she had from living in the UK.



That is why we need to consider integration not only in terms of the here and now. Having your 'life back' in the UK goes beyond being employed, having a roof above your head and knowing people. Rather, our research suggests that integration should be seen as an *encounter* between diverse peoples who have different experiences, and therefore understandings, of both space and time. Integration approaches need to be accommodating enough to recognise and accept experiences, practices and aspirations that expand beyond the now and beyond the here.

Our research suggests that daily lives are much less segmented than we sometimes consider them to be and how both practical and emotional settled-ness are intrinsically interrelated and critical to integration; being unemployed (or unhappily employed) may impact someone's mental well-being, housing situation, social relationships, and so on. Conversely, certain social and familial responsibilities, within or outside the UK, may impact someone's path to education and employment, or their health. Taking a holistic approach we look at how our research participants in many ways always lived in different 'weathers' (literally and metaphorically), how this matters, and how it can contribute to our understanding of integration processes; how the refugee category itself is full of tension and shapes integration processes; and what kind of places (e.g. community centres, cafés or libraries) may help integration processes and why. First, however, we briefly provide an overview of the research design and methodology.

Methodology



Fieldwork:
September 2019 -
March 2020



Who conducted the research?

2 Migration Yorkshire researchers

7 Peer researchers

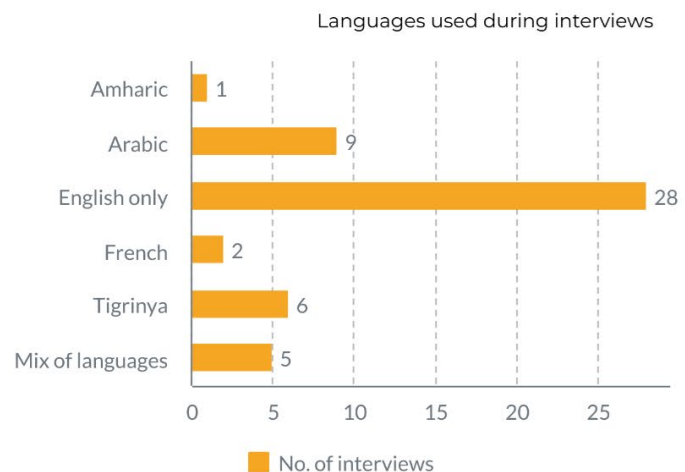
3 Supporting researchers from Universities of Huddersfield and Salford

What fieldwork methods were used?

51



semi-structured interviews
carried out in variety of languages



What did we talk about?

Our questions focussed on:

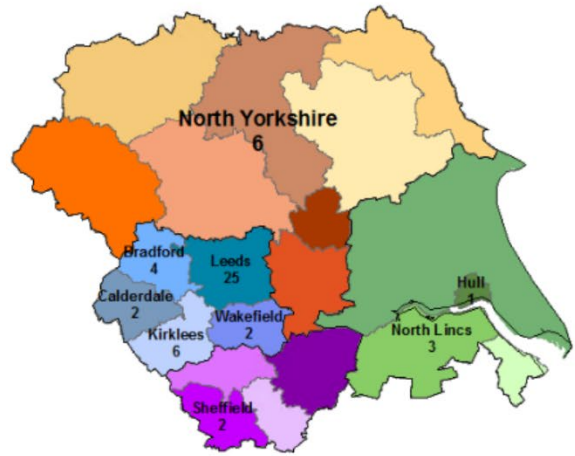
- **Places** that are meaningful in the area of residence
- What helped **cop**ing with life in the UK as a new arrival
- What could **im**prove daily life
- A **typical day** in the UK and prior to the UK
- **Surprises** in the UK upon arrival
- **Advice** to those planning to come to the UK and for settling in
- **Happy moments** in the UK
- Differences for **men and women**
- **Understandings of terms** such as refugee and integration



Where did research participants come from?



Participants came from
23 different countries ...



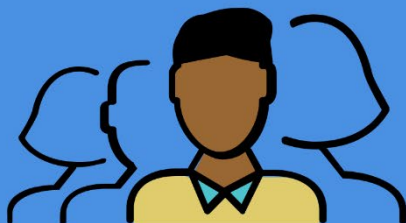
... and resided across
9 local authority areas in Yorkshire and Humber

Who were the research participants?

Interviewees had most commonly come through the asylum process, others had been resettled, reunited with family, or changed their immigration status after arriving in the UK

They had a range of educational backgrounds, from 4 years of schooling to higher degree qualifications

Education was the most common professional field. Professional backgrounds ranged from law to hairdressing, construction to accountancy



Interviewees identified along two genders: male (61%) and female (39%)

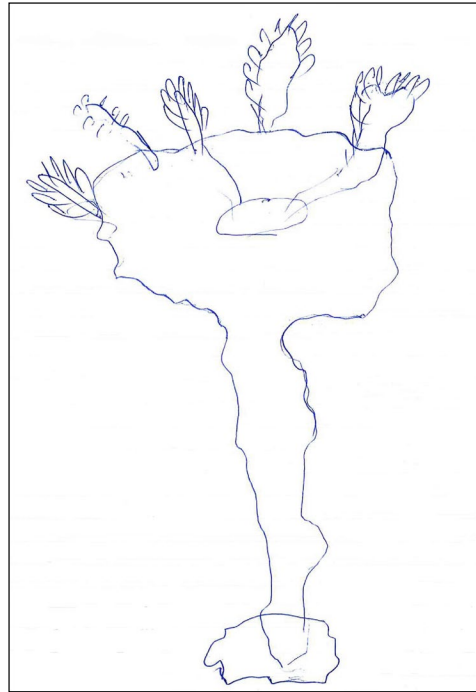
Family groups were the most common type of household

Most interviewees **arrived in the UK during the last 6 years**.

3. 'Living the weathers', integration and social relationships

When we asked him to draw something that would represent how he felt about his life in the UK, this is what Oumar depicted. He explained that he drew it because it was different to how life used to be for him back 'in Africa'. In his words:

'It is a tree...You see, there are trees everywhere here. In a park, all the area is covered with trees... it's different to Africa...We don't [have many trees] in cities. In villages yes, but in the city, just a little bit ... in Africa, trees are not only about their roots and leaves, it's not only to make a place look beautiful. Some trees have specific meaning. It's then important to take care of trees. Some trees are used to treat people; people gather under trees to solve family issues; or discuss about the community. It's not always in conference rooms that crucial decisions are made. In Africa, that is sometimes done under a tree'.



Life (happens) under a tree, drawing by Oumar

Oumar told us two things surprised him most about living in the UK: the weather and the people. For him, the weather was too cold. He thought that this 'could not be good' for him. And people seemed withdrawn, living by themselves, planning every social meeting days in advance. This was very different to how Oumar used to live in Guinea, where during daytime, when it was very hot, people would sit or dance under trees. In the evenings, when it was less hot, everybody would gather on the streets. At the time of the interview, Oumar lived in Huddersfield where he felt lonely and isolated. He longed for the feeling of warmth and togetherness. He told us that he often felt 'stressed'. He felt that even though life in Guinea was difficult, it was shared, people were more together.

Through words and a drawing Oumar was making connections between different ways of living and being: memories and experiences, sense of belonging, relationships, the longing, hopes and fears as enabled *through, by* and *in* weather(s). Thinking about the experiences Oumar missed from Guinea, how and where social encounters happened – spontaneously, outdoors, often under a tree – required a bit more predictability, a bit more sun and not necessarily that many trees, but perhaps using them for different purposes. At first glance it may seem there is not much we can do about issues such as these, so why does understanding and knowing this matter? In what follows we look at how understanding stories and accounts people told about the weather could help in terms of facilitating integration.

3.1 On 'living the weathers'

Sociologist Jennifer Mason tells us that daily conversations on weather and attentiveness to it demonstrate well that 'people are always engaged in the process of living the weather' (2018). Despite this, or perhaps *because* of it, we rarely ruminate over the weather, or conversations about it. If we do, we mostly think about it as an 'external meteorological thing', which we find difficult to articulate beyond the descriptive words that accompany it such as cold, hot, sunny, rainy, and so on. However, Mason suggests that since we 'live *in* weather', and the weather being the 'very medium of living', it may seem somewhat odd to view weather as separate or external to *living* itself. After all, weather is in 'emotion, affect, hopes, fears, longings, imaginings, characters, interactions, and the everyday' (Mason 2016, 2018: 148-153). Perhaps it takes a radical shift in living conditions in order to consider more seriously how 'living the weather' is the practice of life itself– as it was clearly for Oumar.

In one way or another, many people we interviewed talked about the weather: they were surprised by it; they would advise on it; or they mentioned it when they described particular situations, practices or social happenings in and outside the UK. While most people we talked to imagined the UK to be cold and wet, two things were still surprising about it: how the weather felt physically and the weather's unpredictability.

It was not only about knowing it was cold and wet in the UK, which people already knew, but about the reality of *feeling the weather* through, in and on their bodies. Some people felt the weather made their lives more stressful or anxious. Aamira, for example, told us that she was stunned how cold she felt as she came out of the aeroplane, wondering how she was supposed to live here. Other people talked about how the cold weather meant they rearranged their daily activities. For instance, Mazaa was not able to simply wash her hair and go out, something she used to do in Ethiopia, as it was too cold and windy and she needed to use a hair-dryer. This made her hair look and feel different, but it also made her plan her day differently.



The second thing that people found particularly striking about the UK weather was its unpredictability. As Freselam told us, '...you go out thinking it's going to be a sunny, nice weather, but it suddenly becomes dark and starts to rain. I think it would help a lot if refugees are given some information about the weather. This would be especially important for people who come from places with warm and temperate weathers'. What was perhaps more odd for many about the weather's unpredictability was the expectation that you should carry on living 'as usual'. Jean told us that 'because the nature of the weather imposes a new style of life, you need to go out *even* if it's raining...there is no warning, *even* if it's snowing you need to go out for your appointment'. Or Faheem, who at the time of the interview had been living in the UK only for a few months, felt he could not simply carry on with daily activities because of the weather's unpredictability. He told us about differences in daily experiences between Sudan and the UK, through weather:

'...first, here it's cold, in my country not cold, it's hot you can walk anywhere, anytime you can walk ... and you can work [anytime] and anywhere. But here the weather [is] changing, sometimes it is raining and you can't work. If you want to walk to the supermarket, to the gym to football you can't do it when it's raining...'

Our research participants explained that the 'change of weather ... is a big issue'. This mattered because weather 'makes a person in so many ways', it 'changes one's life'. People further described weather as one of the 'basics of life'. If the weather is perceived by our research participants as the very 'basic' of life, if it 'changes life', and 'makes a person' then surely it matters for the processes of integration and how they understand integration; we cannot simply dismiss it as a thing that we can do nothing about. Throughout our research it became apparent that people who moved to the UK from other parts of the world always *lived a variety of weathers*: the UK weather, as well as other weathers – those of the places where they spent much of their lives.

'Living the weathers' suggests that people who arrived in the UK from other geopolitical contexts will not only always have affinities to other places, and other people, and things of all kinds, but also that they will carry at least some of those affinities with them to new places. Practically speaking how people 'lived weathers' manifested in various ways: by means of thinking about how to dress or what to do with a wet hair; by ways of socialising and where; through planting or buying plants that remind you of the familiar smells of the fields of 'home'; and perhaps the simplest example of 'living the weathers' was displayed through food. People we talked to were always engaged in practices of consuming what they considered to be 'local food', while searching and craving for the 'familiar taste'. The latter was important, even when that taste was perhaps less suitable or harder to be found in the UK climate. Just after Mazaa told us that 'weather changes your life' she told us:

'...I am still searching for the food and I couldn't find the right one... The Ethiopian taste, here in Huddersfield... I am asking myself 'what can I eat today?'. I still say that 'Oh! What can I eat that I really enjoy?' First you will be excited when you try everything new, and then time will come and you will really want to eat something familiar, something you are used to.'



Interventions for the winter season

This section brings into light the importance of climatic (and weather) conditions in impacting everyday life. One of the many factors that affect the mental wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers is the dark/dull winter season. I wonder if Migration Yorkshire (and partners) could consider looking further into this and develop a model of support. I am thinking for example what additional or specific interventions could be considered for the winter season to engage with refugees/asylum seekers?

A response by Tesfalem Yemane, peer researcher on the RIYH project and doctoral researcher at the University of Leeds



Everywhere you go, always take the weather with you?

I once learned to 'live the weathers' in a place without four seasons, but a 'rainy season' and a 'dry season' with daily patterns and expectations adjusting to accommodate those variations - such as not going to work in a torrential downpour that will last many hours, or my students missing classes and returning to the family farm at harvest time.

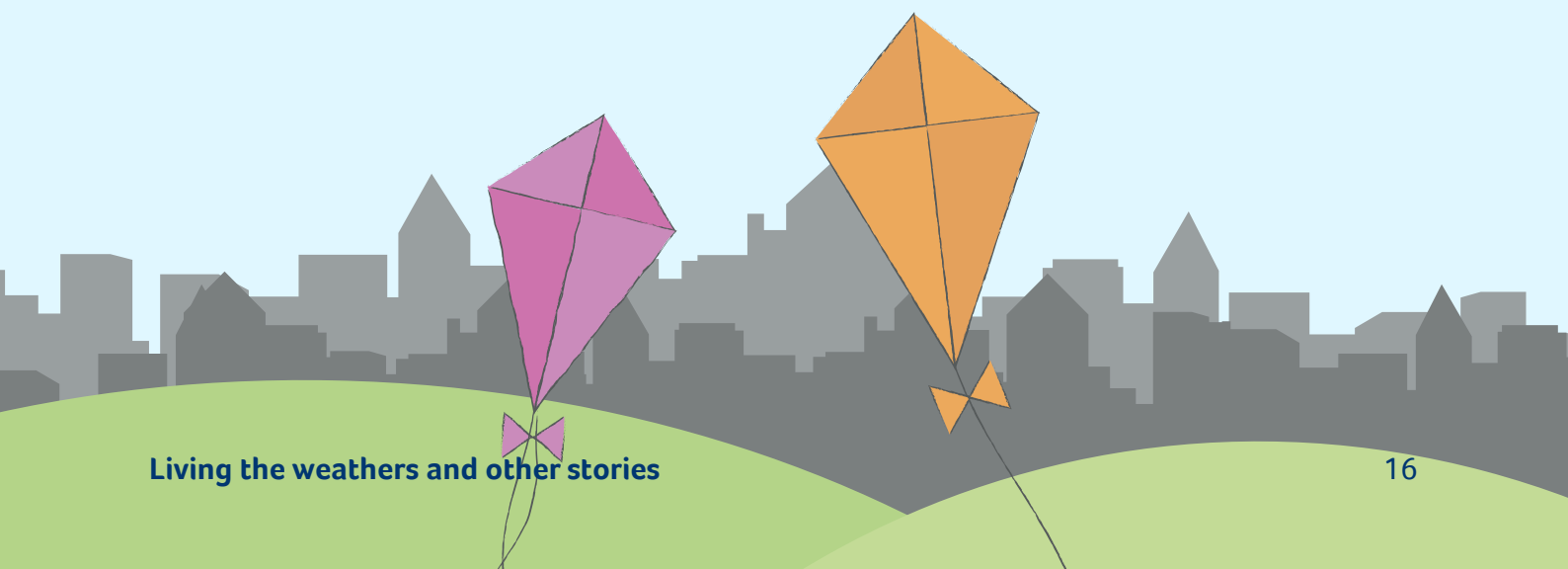
As host communities welcoming refugees to Yorkshire and Humber, should we take the weather more seriously? We Brits we tend to laugh at ourselves for always talking about it, but it's small talk. We dismiss the idea of changing timetables and plans to accommodate the weather in formal areas of our lives, so we still go to work in the snow and we still attend medical appointments on time when there's a downpour. However, we do change our social and leisure plans for weather-related reasons, and plan our downtime for pleasant days where we can.

The participants in this research articulately explained how elsewhere life happens in the outdoors much more than it does in the UK, as a sensible adaptation to a more predictable and temperate climate. So what can we learn from hearing how newly-granted refugees make conscious practical adjustments to accommodate British weather in order to better adapt?

- Service providers in the UK expect clients to attend appointments on time regardless of the weather. Perhaps we could anticipate that those for whom this is the first British summer or winter they've experienced, they may not react in the way that we expect. They may assume an event or appointment will not go ahead if public transport is delayed by poor weather for example.
- People providing invaluable befriending projects between locals and refugees might consider how the weather could impact on a client's expectations. Will this appointment – for the provider it being a formal work-related commitment, but for the beneficiary it may be a social opportunity – be kept by both sides in the event of poor weather? If it is a warm and dry day, would the client welcome the option to hold the meeting in an outdoor location?
- Further, for those of us concerned to encourage friendships and social connections with people in our neighbourhood, without a service dynamic, where is our equivalent of meeting under Oumar's tree? We could identify a physical place or space for social relationships to develop – whether a chat under the bus shelter or in a covered café with a patio heater.

A conversation about this could help to pre-empt expectations on both sides – and striking up a chat about the weather really is our forte, isn't it?

A response to 'On "living the weathers"' by Pip Tyler, Migration Yorkshire



3.2 Weather fronts and cultural crossroads

In the edited collection of essays *From Outside In: Refugees and British society* one of the contributors to the volume tells us that ‘no one who has lost his homeland can be calm again, anywhere, ever’ (Jancic 2007: 147). Regardless of how much time they spent in the UK at the time of the interview (and some have spent many years) most of our research participants implied that different levels of restlessness infiltrated their daily lives. This did not mean that they were not or could not be content or comfortable with their lives here, or that they cannot feel a sense of belonging in the UK. Rather, it meant that much of their emotional and practical efforts were invested in attempts to navigate often challenging processes of integration.

The reason these were challenging was not only because they needed to learn a new language, learn about new practices, values and rules, get used to new food, new ways of socialising and so on, but because at the same time they kept on speaking other languages, maintaining many of already familiar practices, values and rules, cooking foods they were used to, upholding ways of socialising they were accustomed to and so on. People coming to live in the UK from other places need to learn how ‘to live the (UK) weather’ whilst ‘living other weathers’ too.

To put it differently, the restlessness that Jancic mentioned is embedded at the very crossroads where the already existing values, traditions, practices, ways of engaging and being in this world, meet and add onto the new ones. People who lost their homelands find themselves living at these crossroads forever, and that is why they can never ‘be calm again, anywhere, ever’. These crossroads bring to light affinities (Mason 2018) in particular ways, as the potency of the connection - to places, people, things, values, weather, and so on - becomes more apparent.

Many of the drawings people produced for us and the stories, experiences and practices they told us about, presented their lives at a crossroads where they were engaged in attempts to live and practice different weathers. At times they also pointed to the relationship between these and integration policies in the UK. Consider, for example, what Gebre told us:

‘I think this brings us to the perennial question of ‘what is integration?’ ... I think designing comprehensive integration policy in this country should start from the position of understanding and accepting that people who come here bring with them a wealth of knowledge, skills, values and identities. And this should be in tandem with additional support that should be provided to refugees to learn about the language, culture and history of this country in a way that equips them to make the best use of the opportunities around them. It is not right to tell people to forget their identity and copy the identity of their host countries. This is very problematic because ‘the refugee’ has dual identities which come from his country of origin, and the new country. ‘The refugee’ has emotional attachment and bond to his country of origin. ‘The refugee’ also works hard to start a new life and build a new identity here. There has to be enough support for this, making ‘the refugee’ become a bridge between the two countries and societies. This is how ‘the refugee’ feels accepted and valued... And this [integration] should start from the moment a person comes here and claims for asylum ... [if not] the experience makes them feel unwelcome and they lose trust in the system. They will have seen the worst when they get their refugee statuses, and this does not help them set off to a positive journey of integration. People are already hurt by the time they receive positive decisions. However, if you treat people with dignity and respect from the beginning, they develop trust in the system. You have to accept and treat people as people... You have to value what people bring with them, and give them opportunities. Yes, there are opportunities in this country, but they’re very limited... There is no authority that considers the skills, knowledge, experience refugees can bring with them. I think this should be reviewed... it is important to give opportunities to people. If this does

not happen, 'the refugee' will remain alienated here whilst exiled from his home country. People would become disorientated and integration rendered ineffective'.

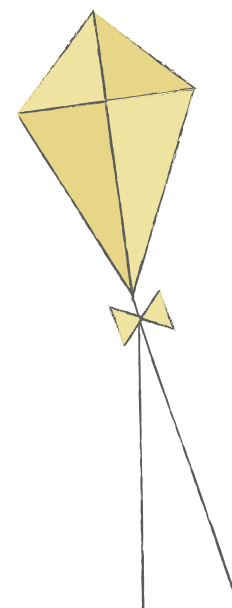
Interview with Gebre

Gebre talked about the importance of designing policy frameworks in ways that recognise and allow individuals' skills, expertise, knowledge and experiences to grow and thrive, as opposed to merely fit into what is already here. From his point of view, this is what integration should be about. Conceptually speaking, policies on integration recognise that integration is everyone's responsibility and that it is multi-dimensional, multi-directional and context specific (Home Office 2019). However, Gebre, speaking from his experience 'on the ground' proposed that this is not how it felt, suggesting that there is a gap between *intention* to practice (certain ideas) and the *actual* practice.

From Gebre's point of view two things are needed in order for integration to happen: the first relates to timing. Gebre believes it has to happen from the moment a person arrives in the UK. Thinking about integration as a process that begins only when people are granted refugee protection is insufficient, as they may already feel 'too hurt'. This point is important. One of the main differences we noticed in experiences between people who arrived in the UK through a government led resettlement scheme with an immigration status and people who went through the asylum application process, was that the latter's experience of starting life in this new country was negatively shaped by procedures and anxieties associated with the uncertainty of the asylum process. These negative experiences frequently dominated some parts of the conversations we had.

The second thing that is needed, according to Gebre, is the acceptance that 'the refugee' will always live the weathers and have affinities - to places, people, smells, touches, hopes, fears, daily things of all kinds - embedded in more than one place: their current and previous homes. For some people this meant three or even four places, as they spent extended periods of time in different locations prior to arriving in the UK, or within the UK. Those of us concerned to cultivate integration need to be able to imagine, learn, consider and understand how these affinities matter and how living different weathers simultaneously may feel. Scholar Alison Phipps (2020) suggests that, since integration happens when people from diverse backgrounds come together, what is needed during those encounters is 'delicacy'. Hence, she sees integration as a 'delicate art that needs everyone's languages'.

Phipps proposes thinking about integration through hospitality, which following Derrida, she sees as 'culture itself'. This means that how and what we eat, how we run our households, how we drink our coffee, how and where we socialise, how and where we discuss important issues and so on, all require flexibility and openness. This, she argues, is the only way to be truly hospitable. So it is not about people arriving in the UK and doing 'Britishness' correctly, but rather generating new culture or perhaps cultures. In other words, integration in Phipps' view is the art of making culture and what we do when we are hospitable is we exchange and share culture(s). By doing so we create new ways of being - which is also what our research participants did while living a variety of weathers.



Current conditions of refugees' countries of origin impact integration

This section brings into dialogue the interrelationship between different places, experiences, temporalities and multiple identities that we form.

I echo Gebre's views on the desire and struggles of maintaining dual (perhaps multiple) identities and beings. In the context of this section, I wonder how transnational links and attachments of refugees fare into considerations/discussions of integration. And I am saying this not only in terms of the past as reference of someone's experiences, but also in terms of current socio-political and economic conditions of refugees' countries of origin and how those conditions impact wellbeing and integration. To give an example, because of the ongoing war in the Tigray region of Northern Ethiopia, and Eritrea's involvement, the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in the UK have been negatively affected over the last 5/6 months. In Leeds, for example, we met with local MPs to bring to their attention the crisis in our region and how this is impacting people in their constituencies. It would be good to further reflect this so that local authorities, especially teams working in communities departments, are aware of how transnational politics directly impact migrant communities in the UK.

A response by Tesfalem Yemane, peer researcher on the RIYH project and doctoral researcher at the University of Leeds



3.3 Weathering the storms through social relationships

Many of our research participants talked about the presence or absence of meaningful social relationships and how these played a major role in how they experienced life in a new country. An absence in these may lead someone to feel emptiness. This was illustrated well in Shanifa's plea for friendship, made to a woman whom she previously met only once, briefly:

'One day, when I was walking on the street in Leeds, I saw her and approached her asking if she speaks Arabic. I started to cry. My daughter was three months old. The woman asked me if I have lost my way, needed money, food or needed any help. I said, 'No. Can you be my friend?' And I started to cry, she said, 'okay, I will be your friend, but who are you? What is wrong with you?' So, yes, I wanted friends...You know when you feel like you are in lack, you need mum, sisters'.

Shanifa's brief story suggests that she could immediately relate to this woman in part because they both spoke Arabic. And indeed, for many research participants, the initial efforts in search for connection were with people from similar backgrounds in terms of shared language, values and customs, or people with shared experience e.g. living in the UK with refugee protection. Partially, this was because shared language and values often made one feel not only more understood, but also more secure in ways in which they could immediately introduce a sense of community, familiarity and intimacy through which a group of people in an unfamiliar country could relate to each other beyond mere words. And partially, it was also because people that have been through similar experiences could learn from, and support, each other. Many times people told us that when they felt alone or lost it was people that had been through similar procedures that provided them with information and support. It was not only that people felt cared for through formal packages of support, they also felt so through informal means of support from people with shared traits and experiences. To encourage integration, we must recognise and draw on the importance of social relationships.

While shared knowledge and familiarity may bring a lot of comfort, we learned that people who seemed perhaps the most settled in their lives in the UK had meaningful connections not only with people they shared language, tradition or experience with, but also with people that could be identified as 'host communities' and who therefore could provide them with knowledge and information on living in the UK from a somewhat different, and therefore complementary, angle. Shanifa, for instance, talked about her close friend she described as her 'children's nana':

'...I have one lady, she is my children's nana. She is 83. When I came to the UK, she saw me, that I was pregnant ...[and] the following day, an ambulance coming to take a pregnant lady. A few days later ... she had the curiosity to come and approach me. She said good morning, what you got? And I said a daughter. She said 'can I buy her present?' and she bought her a small teddy. A first teddy ... in Lebanon to buy a teddy for someone is very expensive and precious. So, she bought it for my daughter. A few days later, she bought her a book... and she said, 'can I come over?' I said, 'yes.' So, every day, she used to come from 6pm to 8pm ... she is a nana, and grandad passed away last December ... When I gave birth to my second son ... My head was over her shoulder. I was crying. I kept my daughter with her when I went to give birth to my son. And grandad came over to the hospital, and said she is a little skinny rabbit... [when] grandad passed away my second daughter was very sad and got depression. She was screaming and crying. She could not cope. He was a real grandad. They are real nan and grandad for my children. I know they (her children) have my mum and dad, the second nan and dad. But nana is a person who sees them daily, who sees you grow up. Nana is someone who shares and become naughty with you.'ohh. Do you have a girlfriend? Do you have a boyfriend?' You know that ... When I give a card, I say, 'Merry Christmas to someone like my mum'...now my daughter is eighteen and half.

We have known them this long. During grandad's funeral, we were sitting in the first row because we are the closest people to them...Nana is the only person I can talk to about everything with no shame, with no secret'.

Throughout the research we found that people who managed to establish different kinds of relationships often also seemed to feel most 'integrated'. Consider for example what Gebre told us:

'I have made many family friends from other nationalities. It is very diverse. I can say I am well integrated. Many of my British friends come over to my family to celebrate Geez Christmas [Eritrean Christmas] with us, and my family and I visit them for any holiday celebrations. The two friends I mentioned before are like family members. They are always in our family for cultural or religious festivities. My family also celebrates two Christmas. Moreover, our food culture and habit has changed. You can call that a new social ecology. I also maintain very close relationship with the Eritrean community. I want my children to learn their culture and language, and maintain their ties with their country of origin. I also want them to be the bridge between the two societies. In the UK, you have every opportunity if you work hard. There is personal security as well. But you have to actively participate in community life. You have to become active member of the community. That is how you integrate'.

Ideally speaking, therefore, it was important for our research participants that the people they encountered in their new neighbourhood, village, town or city provided access to multiple social connections and of different kinds. Let us go back to Oumar. He arrived in the UK from Guinea, West Africa, in 2017 when he was 20. Upon arrival he lived in Leeds where he attended college and made friends with many people from his country. After seven months in Leeds he was allocated accommodation in Huddersfield, where he was still living at the time of our research, 15 months later. Most of his daily activities and relations, however, were still located in Leeds: that is where his friends lived, where he continued to attend college, and where he was able to find special types of 'African' food that he could not find in Huddersfield. Oumar found himself in a position where his house was in one place - Huddersfield - and his life in another - Leeds. Days when he did not have college were difficult and boring, as most of the time he would stay at home by himself. He wanted to move back to Leeds, but understood from his social workers - who were very sympathetic to his situation - that finding accommodation in Leeds may take some time. Oumar told us that in order to endure what we understand to be living at a crossroads, what was needed, at least initially, was 'courage'.

Returning to his drawing again, some may think that there is nothing we can do in order to enable Oumar's relationships to happen under a tree without, perhaps, better weather. Through his drawing he was suggesting that in cities in Guinea, where there were fewer trees, the latter were full of vigour and social life. In the UK, where there were many trees, there was no life happening underneath them, they were forlorn. What Oumar was telling by this drawing, among other things, was that relationships with people, and how and where they happened, were very important to him. Earlier, Oumar also told us that it was his friends that helped him cope best with various challenges posed by living in a new country, and that the reason he liked Leeds was because he had friends there. In Leeds he was exposed to activities through which he was able to get acquainted with life in a new country (e.g. through going to college) as well as maintain connections to activities that resembled some elements he missed from his past (e.g. through social relationships or food). He was finding ways how to live (different) weathers. However, that process was interrupted by his transfer to Huddersfield, which potentially also exacerbated how he experienced both the weather and social relationships in the UK.



Considering reciprocal hospitality or generosity

Gebre talks about an important element in the process of achieving a genuine ‘integration’ – the establishment of bi-national friendship at the micro-level. This also resonates with Phipps’s ‘hospitality’. I am aware of practicalities and the issues of power dynamics of having such relationships in formal settings. But Gebre’s experience talks about an important area of integration enabled by what I would call ‘reciprocal hospitality’ or ‘reciprocal generosity’ where each other’s offer is valued and the refugee is not only a receiver, but also a giver.

Can we think of small befriending initiatives along this kind of thinking?

A response by Tesfalem Yemane, peer researcher on the RIYH project and doctoral researcher at the University of Leeds

Can we compensate for starting on the back foot?

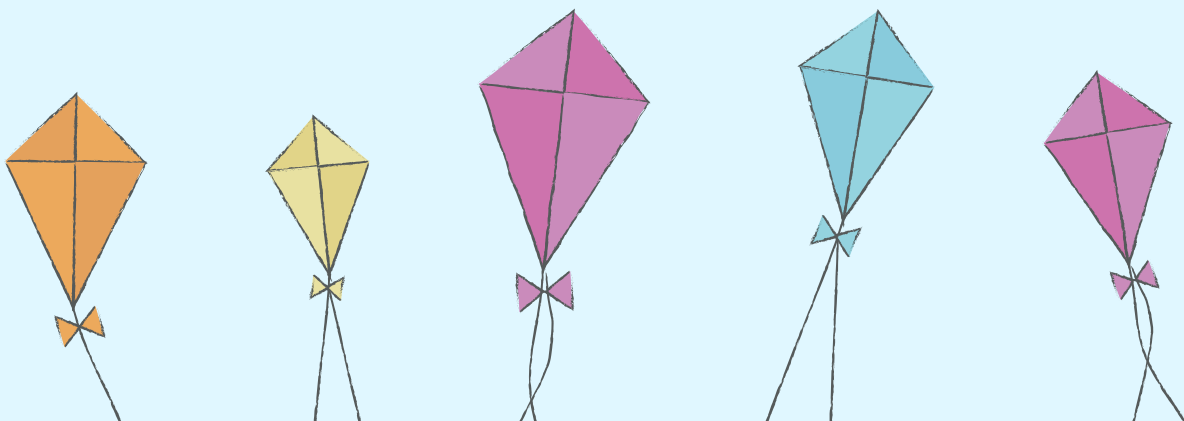
Gebre makes a powerful point that we miss an opportunity to welcome and encourage the integration of many new members of our community, because we haven't been able to support them from 'Day 1' if they have already been in the UK for some time, having worked their way through the asylum process. It's not only the passage of time, but if they have 'already been hurt' as Gebre puts it, because of the hurdles they've had to pass during asylum processing, services may be distrusted by new refugees before even meeting these potential clients. Similarly, Maya (who we will hear from later) restricts her children's freedom because of what she has heard about social services and her enormous fear that any bruises from innocent play might be misinterpreted by a professional as abuse or neglect.

Rather than focus on what we can't really control (the asylum process or rumours about social care) this important point from Gebre and Maya throws up questions for me which may resonate with staff members providing frontline services such as advice services for new refugees: how can we compensate for some new refugees' immediate distrust of figures in authority? How can our policies, services and practices be 'delicate', flexible and not too structured?

For practitioners, service delivery is part of our world of work, which means there are certain formalities, rules and expectations. Refugees are unlikely to frame services they access in terms of their 'world of work' but a means to social and cultural adjustment or something that concerns their whole life and settling in to life in Yorkshire and Humber. Rather than a one-way system, could it be possible to design some service delivery as though it is in the hospitality or leisure industry? Many of our towns, cities, schools and universities are signed up 'places of sanctuary' that suggests a different, delicate framing.

It's clear that one of the critical ways in which some refugees have felt emotionally settled is to develop friendships with people around them. We know that local communities also want this (as Migration Yorkshire explored in our [Communities up Close](#) project). Befriending is a core aspect of some support services, but priorities for integration services have changed over time. Further, it is difficult to engineer friendships that we expect to occur spontaneously at work, at parents' groups, in places of worship; nobody enjoys a forced social setting. But providing opportunities to increase social interactions could provide moments of interaction where they wouldn't otherwise occur. How can we avoid future Shanifas crying on the street through chronic loneliness and persistent unfamiliarity?

**A response to 'weather fronts' and 'weathering the storms'
by Pip Tyler, Migration Yorkshire**

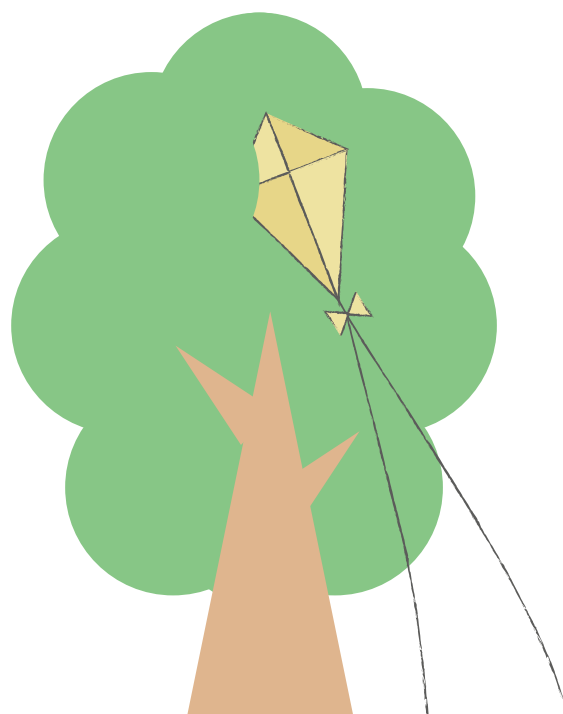


4. On being a ‘refugee’

‘...My life as a refugee in the UK has a lot of ups and downs. Sometime I see good things and bad things, good things, bad things ... You feel like somebody who has been put in a society to which you don’t really belong. Sometimes you try to consider yourself as part of the society but sometimes you feel like it’s not the case. You really understand that you are a refugee, you are not British, that’s how I feel, and far away from your country, far away from your country...the thing with being a refugee is very difficult because it’s part of my identity. If I am in my country and I am a victim of some injustice from my manager I would say the person is not good. But if I face it here, because I am maybe a black person, because maybe she felt that I am not from here, or whatever reason, I put it down to me, then I think ‘oooo it’s because I am a refugee’, and it’s more painful... and sometimes you say ‘oh if I didn’t have this status maybe it would be different’ ...’

Interview with Jean

This insert from an interview with Jean illustrates well that there is no easy or straightforward way to think about the refugee category. Without any doubt, the refugee status, like a spark of light, may give hope to individuals who seek protection from wars, oppressive and unwelcoming regimes, and fear of persecution. However, reading Jean’s words, we notice that the refugee category may also carry with it many burdens, challenges, discomforts, embarrassments and different forms of (un)certainities. How can an immigration *status* that has the power to save a life, potentially secure a future, at the same time produce so many strong, often negative, feelings, also among those very people for whom it may provide opportunities? Over the period of our research we have learned that to *feel* like a refugee is not quite the same as to *have* refugee status (or another form of legal recognition that provides international protection). As clearly conveyed by Jean, uncomfortable feelings may emerge when the formal immigration status comes to feel like it has become an integral part of a person’s identity and how they feel they can, if at all, belong.



It became very clear that the personal feelings and experiences people shared with us were conditioned by a much broader context than legal categories allow for. In other words, we suggest that the *refugee category* extends beyond *having* a particular immigration status into a particular social condition which is much less defined or clear. The reason this matters is that the intricacies embedded in the social status of the refugee category are particularly pertinent in relation to understanding integration processes. This label may impede and shape integration, practically and emotionally. In what follows we briefly consider how a feeling of ‘*being*’ or ‘*becoming*’ a refugee may impact a person’s opportunities and capacities to translate their needs and wishes into realities.

4.1 The legal and social ‘lives’ of the refugee category

Consider the refugee category as having different ‘lives’. While these are connected, overlapping and inform each other, spatially and temporally they are not quite the same as they belong in different domains.

The first one is the *legal domain* and covers matters such as rights and responsibilities. There are many variations in the terms used by the Home Office to legally document someone in need of international protection, including: refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary leave as well as documentation stating ‘leave to remain’. While these are similar in many ways, there are some important differences between them, though these are beyond the scope of this research, and therefore will not be considered here. While the UK immigration system is very complex, once an individual is granted immigration permission, legally speaking, their path usually seems to be relatively defined. People with refugee status, for example, are often granted five years’ of limited leave to remain with permission to work, study as well as access to the NHS and the welfare system. Subsequently, usually an individual can apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) and, eventually, British citizenship. Therefore, this domain, generally speaking, is designed to be spatially and temporally defined and structured, even if at times various complications can emerge, for example if an individual commits a crime.

Our focus here is more on the second domain of the ‘refugee category’, which is messier and much less framed as it reflects a certain *social* condition. We may call it the *social domain*, or the social life of the refugee category. While it incorporates the individual’s emotions in relation to challenges and opportunities associated with the formal refugee status (in the first domain), it extends beyond it spatially and temporally. In other words, the *social life* of the refugee category may have a bearing long before or after the granting of the *legal status*. For example, in the eyes of UK law, someone is considered to be a refugee from the moment their asylum application is approved (prior to this they formally belong in the category of people seeking asylum). However, the personal experiences of the individuals we met were less rigid and defined. When people talked about what the word refugee evoked, they did not only consider it within clear and established understandings of policy and law. People’s stories about their ‘refugee experiences’ were often located in different places and times. The social domain of the refugee category often began to matter from the moment an individual fled their home, which could be years before they received their legal status. Or, in some cases, it could come to matter slowly, over time, after they obtained the legal status, especially for individuals who previously resided in the UK on another visa, such as a student visa.

Some people could not dispose of the refugee label long after they secured their ILR or British citizenship. As one person we talked to told us, ‘I [still] see myself as a refugee. It does not go away from you. Yes, as a British citizen you have every right, but the label is always there. It affects you’. Similarly, another person told us that he was ‘shocked’ to find out that even when he secured his ILR his biometric residence permit (BRP) stated ‘refugee’ [settlement]. This made him wonder: ‘why do they still call you a ‘refugee’ if you have indefinite leave to remain here? You know, the tag remains with you. I did not expect that... Why not [simply] write ‘indefinite leave to remain’? I am human, not a refugee...Why the separation?’

We asked our research participants to tell us what the first connotation that came to their mind was when they heard the word ‘refugee’. Some of them said only one word, others elaborated (see [Appendix](#) for more details). Our participants’ reactions were informed by personal experiences, trajectories and prospects, as much as by representations and portrayals in the media or the expectations of host societies, various state and non-state organisations. Declan,

told us that ‘refugees are people unable to practice their craft’. Not being able to practice one’s craft meant the refugee label often creates a person with a particular – often unenviable – past, and therefore with a specific future – often with limited opportunities. Consider, for instance, the following two inserts from interviews with Anita and Fresalem:

‘You know that word [refugee] is quite a hurtful word I think... when people think ‘oh she is a refugee’ they are like ‘oh this is like poor person’. It’s like people don’t realise that people had a life before they were given a status of refugee. So you have to think you’re coming to somewhere new, and people think you had nothing you had no culture, you didn’t see a microwave you don’t know what a sandwich is... you are not a human you are just a status, you have nothing and you are poor. And you don’t have education and your parents, they didn’t have education... I think this kind of stigma needs to stop.’

Interview with Anita

‘...I had pre-arrival information about the city [Leeds]. And generally it has been okay so far. Of course, I am not settled emotionally as I have not found a job in my profession. For a refugee like me, it is not easy to secure a job commensurate to one’s skills and academic qualifications. But I am able to pay my bills by working as a warehouse operative... I do not know if what I say now is true, but I wonder if my background comes into play. When I check the LinkedIn profiles of many of my former [UK] classmates, I see that most of them have secured good jobs. They have less life experience compared to me. If I were to be given the same opportunity, honestly, I would be the best. Because I am a dedicated person, and I never rest until I achieve any task I am assigned to. I have made many applications, but I suspect that they’re rejecting my applications when they check my CV.’

Interview with Fresalem

Quite a few research participants, similarly to Anita, told us that one of the main issues they had with the refugee label was that it made them feel that their pasts were irrelevant. Working in a very different context from the UK in 2020, scholar Liisa Malkki showed how sometimes humanitarian interventions by international organisations aiming to help refugees, ignore the personal circumstances and (hi)stories of people who find themselves in the refugee category. As a result, refugees are seen as people clustered through shared misfortune, but lacking any specificity as to what and how that misfortune happened from their personal points of view. According to Malkki, by not being treated as historical and political actors, refugees become not only ‘mute victims’, but also ‘pure victims in general: universal man, universal woman, universal child, taken together universal family’ (Malkki 1995: 378). If the past is not considered important, it inevitably impacts the future and what kind of future a person may have. This was what Fresalem meant as he made a direct link between his experience of having had a refugee status and his inability to fulfil himself professionally in accordance with his education and skills. All this made him feel unsettled emotionally, shaping not only his sense of recognition, social status and choice, but also the whole process of integration.

4.2 Opportunities for emotional and practical growth

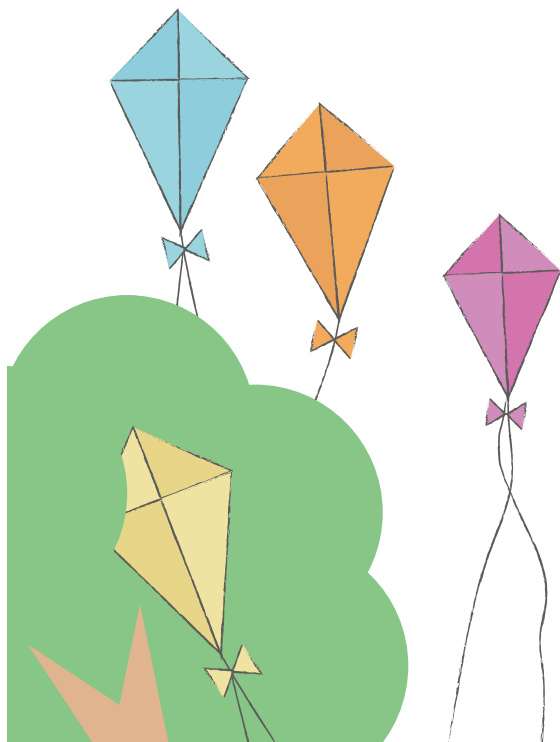
Let us go back to the interview with Jean. He previously arrived in the UK with another status: he was doing an MA in a UK university, and thus resided here on a student visa. When it became dangerous for him to return to his country, he was advised to seek refugee protection here. Jean noticed a big difference in the experience of living in the UK with different statuses. As an international student he received a scholarship and felt he was pampered, taken care of, almost spoiled; he had 'peace of mind'. The moment his status changed, however, everything changed and he started to feel like he no longer mattered. When Jean talked about his experience of being in the UK on a student visa, he described it as a 'normal' way of residing here, as if to suggest that staying here on a refugee permit was somehow abnormal.

Jean found the transition from one status to another very challenging. During our conversation Jean went on to tell us how he was contacted by an employment agency after they noticed his CV online. They were very impressed with his work experience and his language skills. Sounding enthusiastic, they asked if they could pass on his details to a potential employer. Jean agreed. Sometime later they emailed to say that they forgot to ask about his immigration status and whether he had the right to work in the UK. Jean replied that he had refugee status and that it allowed him to work with no restrictions. After that he never heard back from the agency. He concluded: 'I cannot understand this shift... So it brought me to this - it's because I am a refugee.'

Others also told us how the transition from one immigration status to another created a different set of opportunities. This transition did not happen overnight and, for Jean and some of the other people we talked to, it involved another immigration status. First, Jean was a student. When he applied for refugee protection he entered the category of a person who seeks asylum. This status involved a prolonged period of waiting: Jean waited a few months, while some people we talked to waited much longer, sometimes even several years. This is important as we already mentioned that this was one of the main differences between people who arrived in the UK already with a legal status, and those who sought refugee protection after they arrived here. The waiting period of the asylum process, during which people have a decreased set of rights (e.g. no right to work), often had debilitating effects. Inevitably, it impacted not only their trust in the system but also their ability to settle and feel settled once their application got approved. Because they felt stuck for protracted periods of time, it made it impossible to work and plan towards their future. And while people who arrived here through resettlement programmes also could experience this sense of feeling stuck, often such feelings were associated with another geopolitical context, such as refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey. It was *other places* that were remembered as those where they had limited rights, and as places that did not offer any possibilities for better life.

Once they secured their legal status, many of the challenges our research participants faced in the UK were embedded in the social domain of the refugee category. Similarly to Jean, Hooman arrived in the UK on a student visa. After completing his PhD and a post doctorate at UK universities he too applied for refugee protection. After some time he was granted this status, but not without a toll: while the refugee and student statuses allowed him to work in the UK, the asylum status did not. This left a gap in Hooman's CV that generated questions among employers. Hooman tried to explain it. In his own words: 'when [I] say I was an asylum seeker, this stuff is not academically interesting. It really does not matter how many publications you have or how brilliant you were in your studies. This is a matter of fact that people have a sort of preconception/judgement about the word 'asylum/refugee'. This may break your 30-year CV if you put the word refugee in the first line'.

The idea that opportunities and rights change in relation to legal status is not surprising. What is relevant to us here is to understand how while everything was becoming different around them due to the change in legal status (e.g. having to move to another city as part of the asylum process), Jean and Hooman each were also *becoming* a different person, with different opportunities. This is what Jean meant when he told us that what was challenging about 'being a refugee' was that it had become part of his identity. This marked him in a particular way, making him question the extent to which this status enabled or prevented him from achieving goals in terms of any aspect of his daily life.



Both Jean and Hooman expressed how 'refugee-ness' became part of their identity and acted as a predetermining factor for how they understood their opportunities for self-growth and personal development. Many others felt similarly, telling us how it impacted their apprenticeship opportunities, their ability to find private accommodation or their social encounters. Alia for instance told us that 'one of the main challenges when you move out of G4S [asylum] accommodation...It is not easy if you are a refugee'. Or Se'are who told us that he would like to get an apprenticeship but that 'for refugees, it is hard to get apprenticeship opportunities, because they believe that your English is not good... [but] in this country, apprenticeship is important'. Se'are also talked about his friend's experience in order to convey how the refugee label shaped social encounters in somewhat uncomfortable ways:

'... He was at university and had refugee documents. When he would go to nightclubs with his friends, he wouldn't want to enter with them. He would pretend that he wanted to withdraw cash and go back, only to get in separately...[because] his friends would make fun of him, reminding him that he is a refugee. It is a joke but you know, it hurts. You are going to university, you are doing the same thing as them. But you do not want them to know your situation, you know...a refugee is a refugee... [or] if there is a school trip, let us say to Germany, you can fly tomorrow if you are British. But if you are a refugee, you have to apply for travel document and a visa. One of my friends at college went on a school trip to Italy, and he told me it was difficult for him. He told me that when they were going through different [European] countries, he was constantly being stopped and his documents checked. But it was only him. He said even his teacher was making jokes about the situation. So, every time they are about to reach a border, his teacher would say: 'ohhhh, it is going to happen again'... He had to get out of the bus and his travel document would get checked.'

Serene told us that for her there was something frustrating about the word 'refugee' and explained how it was a source of embarrassment for her children:

'...First of all that word brings discrimination or it brings distinction between people who were born here and those who came to seek shelter or refuge. So you see, when we talk about refugee or shelter, we see people who flee their country because of issues straightaway ... It brings

inequality... you feel destitute, you feel like a person with no value, a person with no importance in the community, so that's it. You feel inferior and even the children don't like it. For that reason, whenever I am walking with them, my son always asks me not to mention to people that I have a refugee status. And if you ask him, he would rather say we came here from France, just to avoid the embarrassment...'

Interview with Serene

Legally speaking, it should not be an issue to find employment, an apprenticeship or rent private accommodation when having refugee status. However, many people told us of ways in which their legal (refugee) status impacted their social and daily life, making the refugee category more than just a matter of rights and responsibilities. We illustrated how it was also a matter of opportunities, a sense of belonging, emotions and feelings, practices, self-esteem, recognition, empowerment, and independence, in a very real way that could have shaped the processes of integration. We suggest this is also why the word 'refugee' evoked such strong feelings among interviewees. In what follows, we look at some practices and activities that helped people with settling in.

'Refugee' permeates every aspect of life

Once the 'refugee' is attached to a person, it lives with them. 'Refugeeness' becomes essentialised and naturalised, characterised by the spectacle of the 'refugee' as lacking and with deficits. It permeates every aspect of the refugee's life - employment, education, housing, hospital visitations, banking services, renting, social encounters, and so on. I have experienced that myself and through my work. What I think could help mitigate some aspects of this (at least in practical sense) is to initiate external engagement with service providers who would engage (and do awareness raising, if needed) with renting associations/landlords, big employers, banking services and other actors as relevant.

A response by Tesfalem Yemane, peer researcher on the RIYH project and doctoral researcher at the University of Leeds



What's it like to live with an immigration status?

I once overstayed my visa while living abroad. Seeing my bus leave without me, my boss called by the police, having my passport taken away, and being required to report to the police station was a novel, insightful, and of course unnerving experience. I instantly felt vulnerable and unsure how serious this was.

Until that moment, as a British citizen I had never needed to confront my own right and privilege to be present. So the concept of having an 'immigration status' is not familiar, and not something that most people in the UK have an equivalent for or can relate to.

An immigration status can't be equated with a nationality (your immigration status isn't your national identity) although service providers may treat it similarly, for example to confirm eligibility to access a service. It's not the same *in the social domain* as being a traveller overseas; a tourist or a 'short term visitor' (as I was) isn't a long-term social situation. There are some parallels - in relation to length of time present and the temporariness implicit in that passport stamp. But it isn't imbued with any meaningful weight of belonging or implication of what is personally past and what might be the future.

The preceding chapter helpfully conceptualises being a 'refugee' as a social condition as well as an immigration status. We can never really know until it happens what it might feel like to be asked to confirm our immigration status, whether we would infer in the question some kind of accusation or interrogation about your own right to be present and where you can belong. But we have it within our own power to treat someone 'like a refugee' or not, whether that means pity, sympathy, dislike, or reverence, and to perpetuate any negative associations of that social status.

I'm often asked by researchers, journalists, members of the public, elected members and service providers for help to ascertain the number of refugees in a particular locality. Many organisations collect data in order to competently plan and deliver services to refugees.

This research speaks to those of us who are interested in migration patterns, who work with data, make funding bids or plan services. From time to time, it's right to examine what we are measuring and why. Who do we need to count to describe the refugee population? And does that need to include people who have lived here for many years, have gained ILR or citizenship, who no longer need specialist support but use services in line with the rest of the population?

A response to 'On being a "refugee"' by Pip Tyler, Migration Yorkshire

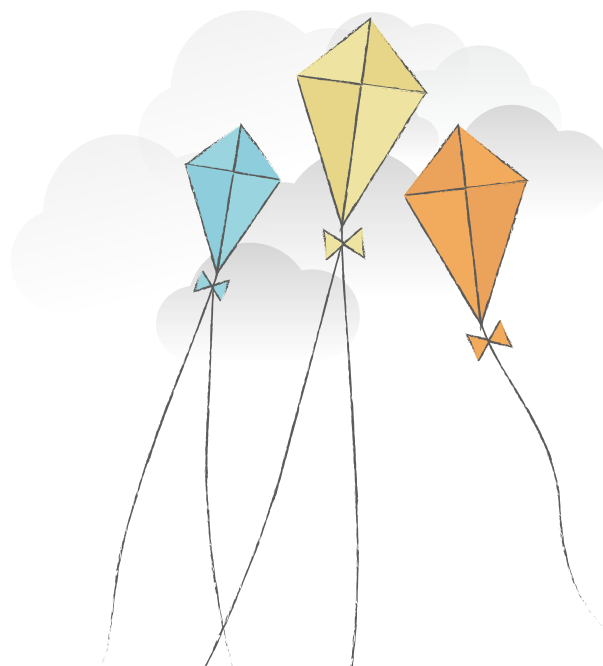
5. Settlement strategies

In our research we asked people what places were meaningful for their daily life, and in what ways were they so. Places they mentioned most often were those that enabled engagement in positive activities that could be seen as settlement strategies for starting life in a new country. What made people feel more settled, or more 'at home' in a new country, was facilitated *in and through* a specific place (e.g. a community centre, a work place, or a library) which provided access to people's needs and wants. Understanding what kind of places were important to our research participants could be significant for integration processes.

One of our research participants, Gebre, told us how from the very beginning, the church played a huge role in his life in the UK. In his words:

'The church also gave me the opportunity to meet new friends. People were praying for me. They knew about my pain. The church is indeed a very important place that helped me to make lasting friendship with some people. For example, I met my best friend in the church. He is a British citizen who has played a critical role in my life in this country... Having grown up in church, I attach great importance to the role of the church in my faith, my identity and my principles as a person. The church helps me guide my daily life in the right way ... the church also plays special importance to me personally. It is a safe place that I can perform emotional and spiritual reflection. It is a place of psychological security. My asylum journey was very difficult. When I came here, I left behind my family, my profession, my status, my vision and the security that comes with all these. And the reception from the Home Office was not very great. You're always a suspect... It was very difficult. This makes you fear about your future, your family and your profession. You become disorientated. You also become suspicious of people around you. You do not know what to expect of others around you if the authorities who have a responsibility to support you treat you differently. In view of this, the church was the all-important sanctuary place. It was a place where I can find people who I can identify with. I go to church to pray, to meet friends. This makes me happy because I can meet people who consider me as human. The importance of the church cannot be understated.'

Clearly, a single place has a potential to become crucial for integration. The church played an important role in Gebre's settlement in the UK because it provided him with opportunities for meaningful relationships, or a sense of *community*; spiritual and emotional comfort, or a sense of *security*. It also provided him with a sense of *familiarity* as he grew up exposed to church related practices. Finally, it gave him a sense of orientation in moments when he needed it most, so it provided him with a sense of *hope and possibility*. According to scholar Ghassan Hage these four - *security, familiarity, community and sense of possibility or hope* - are the key feelings that every process of 'home-building' aims to maximise. Therefore they are very relevant for our concern here.



Hage develops the notion of *intimation* in order to explain how triggered nostalgia may offer possibilities of homely feelings. He suggests that the ideal home is more an aspiration than existing reality, and that the reason some places may feel more homely is because they ‘provide *intimations of homeliness ... and the possibility for more*’ of the four key feelings:

- Security – a key feeling which satisfies the most basic needs. Places, however, can feel secure also when they don’t feel homely. In order to make them feel homely what is needed is for a person to feel empowered to pursue their needs. For this to happen a place needs to be governed by what we think of as ‘our law’.
- Familiarity – a feeling that is generated through practical and spatial knowledge of where and what everything is, what it is for and how to use it. The implicit familiarity suggests spatial and practical control which increase the feeling of security.
- Community – a feeling that involves living among people that a person thinks of as ‘her/his own’. It includes shared symbolic forms, values, morality and power to communicate (shared language).
- Sense of possibility or hope – home has to be a space where someone feels they have opportunities for ‘a better life’, for personal, emotional or financial growth (Hage 1997: 1–4).

In our own research the increased sense of these four feelings seemed to be fundamental in making our research participants feel more settled in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Hence, in what follows we look at what may be helpful in achieving those feelings. We propose that the role a certain place, such as church, can play in increasing the key four feeling that Hage is talking about seems pertinent especially since at first, many people told us, everything appears unfamiliar, sometimes even strange, from small practices – such as buying a bus pass - to practices embedded in laws. Most commonly, the particular place people talked about was a café or a restaurant, community-based charity organisation or a community centre, place of worship, park, library, particular school, college or university, food market or a shop that sells familiar food, sports club or a gym, home or a work place. A few people also talked of a meaningful place in a more general sense, where a certain city or town mattered as a whole.

Places that featured most often as those that mattered usually facilitated the sense that people could grow emotionally and practically through engagement in various meaningful activities there, therefore increasing feelings of security, familiarity, community and sense of possibility or hope. We grouped places as enabling particular meaningful activities into three categories: know-how places; places of familiarity; and hope enabling places (many places people talked about – such as Gebre’s church – could fit into more than one category). We suggest that meaningful activities in these places have an important role in making one feel more ‘at home’ in a new country.

5.1 Know-how places

The first type of place that people often talked about as important enabled activities through which our research participants could familiarise themselves better, in a supportive environment, with how things are done, here and now, in Yorkshire and Humber and so helped them learn about the new country. Good examples of these kind of places were community-based charity organisations, community centres, work places, education settings or libraries. Consider the following insert from the interview with Freselam:

‘Sheffield public library was also very important to me. I had my membership card, and I used to go there regularly. After I received my refugee status, I also used to go there to do job search activities... A ‘personal mentor/advisor’ is how I would describe the library. The library was my best friend. As a newcomer, things can be disorientating, and it was during those difficult times that the library offered me steady guidance. I borrowed a lot of books and DVDs from there. When I felt down, I would draw my inspiration by reading uplifting biographies of different people or by watching motivational videos. I was spending more than six hours in the library. Sometimes, I would only go to my asylum accommodation to eat. The library was my second home.’

Freselam described the library as a second home and as a place that was like ‘a personal mentor’ which provided him with ‘steady guidance’ on starting life in a new country. He talked about engaging in activities which fulfilled his present (e.g. watching motivational videos) and which also enabled him to engage and plan for the future (e.g. job hunting). Another person we spoke with, Senait, talked about children’s centre - Sure Start – as playing a crucial role in her experience of living in Leeds. This centre provides recreational activities for children, while at the same time serving as a socialising place for adults. The staff that worked there, Senait remembered, were very caring, and she felt that through that centre she received great support and always learned a lot. In particular she remembered one trip they organised to Scarborough in 2007, which left a long lasting impression on her. In her words:

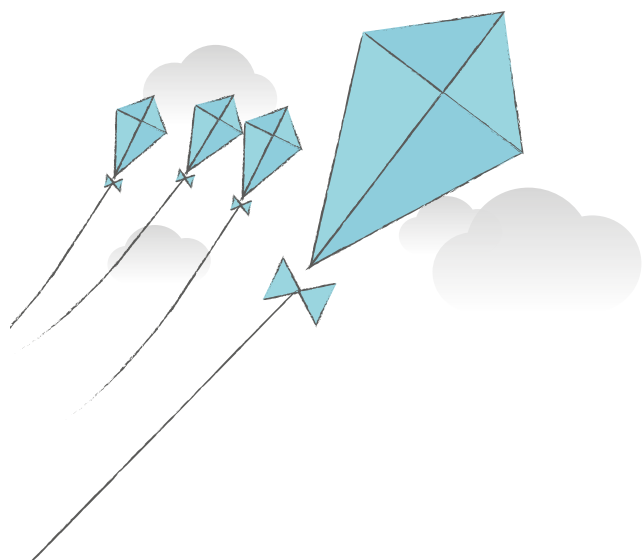
‘...it gave me the opportunity to know and make friends with people ... many new asylum seekers came along ... I will never forget this moment. I made friends with a lot of people; and to be at the seaside was a refreshing moment. It helps clear the mind of stress ... So, Scarborough and Sure Start Centre were the most important places to me ... [on a trip to Scarborough] I met a lot of people from different backgrounds: Asians, Africans and British. The organizers looked after us and our children very nicely. So, the whole journey has left in me a lasting impression. Considering the challenges we overcame when we first came, it was heartening to see how they welcomed us. It was an unexpected experience. I am still in contact with friends whom I met on that occasion. Furthermore, the place was unique. It was a beautiful seaside. You can play with your children. It was a place of happiness. It refreshes your mind.’

In addition to Sure Start being helpful, Senait’s memory of the trip to Scarborough is telling of how important the connections she made with people during that trip were, and also of how calming the effects of the seaside were.

5.2 Places of familiarity

The second type of important place enabled activities through which people felt they could, as one woman told us, ‘get back some old routines, even if in a different [new] place’. These activities were already somewhat familiar and known, and therefore provided them with some sense of security. Good examples of those kind of places were stores/markets that sold familiar food, cafés or restaurants, green spaces or religious institutions. Mazaa, for example, described how when she entered the house her family had been allocated in Huddersfield, the first thing she did was to scan the sky outside the window in search for a cross. At first all she could see were chimneys, but then she spotted it: a house opposite theirs said on it ‘community church’. Mazaa told us she felt privileged that this happened to her, that the house they were allocated was just opposite church. She explained in what ways the church was important:

‘We can’t do without church and the church family...[Church is important] because we have a lot of common things. Our belief and our hopes are the same, we live for our values. You know that will connect us. Even if we are not in the same country and we didn’t grow up together, if there is a culture and we believe the same God and we read the same bible, that helps to connect people ... I think for us and for our family that is very important. When we were back home that was our belief and our value system, what we want to pass to our children. That was very important. I was worried if I couldn’t find that what will happen in my life because you know when you come to the new country you don’t know. Would you really find what you really value, and what’s really important for your life, or not?...we went to the place [the church] and then we meet the people, [who] helped us [on] Fridays they have chat space, they welcome everyone...They do that and help us with the school so we met the parents who go to the same school my son attended. That is how the connection helped us.’



Many of our research participants communicated that one of their main concerns before arrival in the UK was whether they would be able to retain some sense of belonging. One of the ways to do that was through a search for and finding of the familiar. Mazaa, for instance, knew that finding a church – a place she knew what it stood for and its values even if geographically located miles away from everything she recognised - could help generate some ease. People also told us how familiar tastes were important in helping them feel that homely feeling. It was, therefore, not surprising that people were always in search of shops and markets that sold food they instantly knew what to do with. Mazaa conveyed this well when she told us that at first people get excited and they want to try everything new, but eventually what they really want is to eat ‘something familiar, something they are used to’.

Also cafés and restaurants play a crucial role in enabling people to engage in familiar activities with people they share a language with, who could make them feel more comfortable and perhaps even more secure. This is, for example, what Petros told us, trying to explain why a certain restaurant played an import role in his life:

'...what I think is important is the place where the Habesha community [people from Ethiopia and Eritrea] is found. I don't have a different life other than that...restaurant ...The people I meet at the restaurant are important to me....It's a place where you gain experience ... Currently, it is like school not only for me but also for many Habesha. Many people in this restaurant do not only need food and drink. There are people who come looking for someone ... It would be nice if there were more such places.'

It is important to contextualise what Petros was saying with what he previously experienced. He told us that when he just arrived in the UK he lived in an area of Leeds where there were no people from the 'Habesha community'. Being in a foreign country with no contacts made him worry a lot: not only did he not know how things worked in the UK, but he also felt that if he needed help he had no one to turn to. His asylum application was refused and he felt completely alone and worried:

'...what you see next is your eviction [from the provided accommodation]. You imagine being kicked out immediately. Because you have no future. If you left that house, where would you go? You would be like those people who sleep on the street with a blanket. Because if you don't have anyone, if you don't have community, where do you go?'

Petros was confident that someone who identified with the 'Habesha community' would understand his situation and help him. This is where informal means of care and support came to matter. Even if he found himself in a precarious condition he would feel some form of security, but without knowing anyone he was in danger of ending up on the streets. Eventually, Petros' asylum claim was approved, but being in a precarious legal position and alone – without attachment to any community – left a toll on his life also when he was granted refugee status, making him feel most comfortable among the community he felt part of. One of the most important places for him was the restaurant where he regularly met with people that made him feel safe, that would help him should he need help again, and where through regular discussions he was able to learn about life in the UK and developments elsewhere in the world.

5.3 Hope-enabling places

The third type of important places enabled engagement in activities that generated a sense that the future would bring more opportunities and lead to a 'better life'. All those we talked to aspired to a good life. Feeling safe or doing activities that felt familiar were an important part of having a good life, but they were only an important part, not the complete purpose. People also wanted to move forward, to grow in every possible way, and for their children to grow. Places that became really important bestowed that sense of hope and possibility for growth and which eliminated the feeling of being stuck. Very often these were work places, community centres or education settings. Maya told us how a certain place – a specific community centre – helped her immensely when she found herself in a very challenging situation, and also how it provided her with a future opportunity:

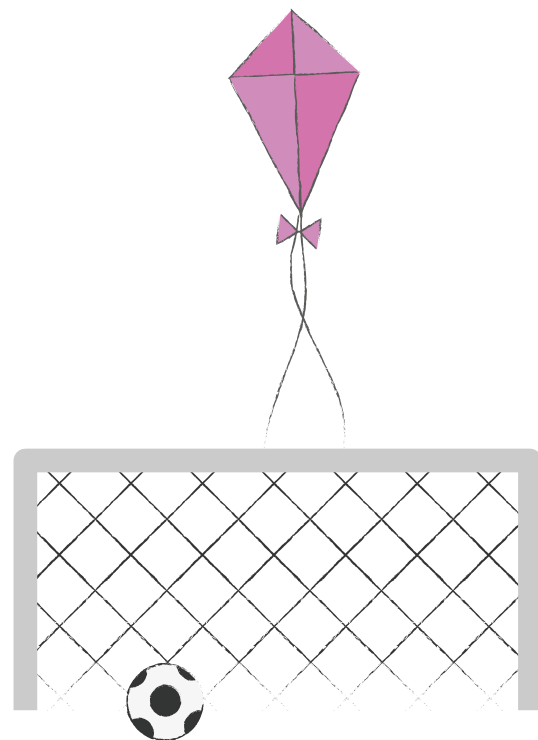
'...I worked with the community [centre] and I found it very helpful and a positive place for me. I found a lot of good friends from there [who] support me in lots of things, like when I had my children issue [my children being taken away by social services]... it makes me calm always as they are all next to me... the people who work in this community are friendly and helpful people, and I still have contact with them. I started my own organisation separately and this whole idea came from there ...When this issue [my children being taken away] happened to my life I recognized that everybody might be involved in the same situation like me and they don't know what to do or how to prevent this from happening to their life. I knew many of my friends are scared and they panicked when they saw my life become like this: they knew how I was with my children, and suddenly this happened. And so they were scared, they are still scared but they can't express their own feelings to the service, to the public or get help from them... And because of that they accept to have these small issues with their family or their life without involving any services or asking for help. So then I thought it would be better to open an organisation of my own to support the women ... [what happened to me is a result of] lack of information of the laws of this country. You know, women's rights, I didn't know about my own rights. If this kind of thing happened to me, but I knew my rights, it might be much easier for me, or easier to face, but I didn't know anything so it was very complicated for me to go through all these issues... that's why I want to raise awareness about what is allowed and what is not allowed specifically about the children, how to protect, how to behave and also if there is some issue before it comes to this point and how you can deal with it...these kind of things and issues make life tougher for everybody in the UK to live and have a comfortable life. It's really hard... I think that's not good, the children are suffering as well where they are...they are looking for the children to be safe, there are many other option they can provide for the parents rather than taken the children away, making children and parents suffer and then say "we save", that's not helpful. But I know many family suffer from that... most women they are not happy and they always have fear at the back of their heads about these things ... As a refugee when you come from other country, other culture to here, you need more understanding, to learn more, and to have more support.'

Maya first expressed how a particular place – a women's community centre – helped establish relationships that were crucial at a time when she needed it most. Women attending this community centre were brought together by their shared fears and lack of knowledge about the rules and their rights in the UK. They were also joined by the support and care they provided to each other. The knowledge that someone is not alone, and that others are going through a similar experience, have similar fears or lack similar information itself may provide some comfort. Furthermore, Maya also told us how, through her engagement in the women's community centre where she realised that her situation was not unique, she was also able to recognise the existing gap in service provision which pushed her later on to set up another organisation with a clear aim to fulfil this gap.

Murab told us that when he had just arrived in the UK he could not register with any of the colleges for English language classes as there was no availability. He said he did not want to stay at home: 'it's not good for you. You need to see people and forget some things that happened and to look different, to look normal in a new country you know, but it wasn't easy...'. So one of the first things Murab did was to search for a place where he could play football, a practice he was already familiar with, and which generated some sense of hope for him. Soon after he found a team, and at the time of the interview he has been playing for a semi-professional club. Unsurprisingly then, one of the most meaningful places for him was the football club:

'...football helped me a lot to integrate myself because since I came here, I quickly found a football club team and there you need to communicate with other people...In that team, I had a friend who helped me a lot, a British friend ... he also contacted the college for me... and he took me there to do the assessment ... Football in my life helped me a lot. I did not gain millions but it helped me to have very good friends, relationship you know, when you play for a football team, you see different people, different type of people. Also if you are a good player, people will respect you and talk to you, so it makes it easier for you to have good contact to ask things that you want to have [at some point Murab changed a club] ...I felt excited you know, when you change a club for another, there is always a reason ... when I went there I like the way they play, I like the way they respect people and after that day, I decided to join them. So things are going well now. I feel free, I feel my confidence is high now because I know people who are behind me respect me, expect something from me so I am giving them what they expect from me....So playing ... helped me to integrate [with] the English community because I need to go to training, I need to play, we are traveling to different cities, different country for football. So we got a WhatsApp group where we interact every time, send messages and those messages helped a lot to improve my English. Because sometimes they send messages I don't understand. I asked them they explain to me so, I knew the next time if they say that, what that meant. So the football helped me a lot to settle really good in the UK.'

For Murab, the football club created many opportunities to make friends, to learn English, to learn about life in a new country, as well as to regain confidence and self-esteem, something that many people felt they lost when they were forced to flee their countries or upon arrival in the UK. Considering many of our research participants felt 'uprooted' from previous homes, establishing meaningful routines or connections to places and people that would fulfil their needs and wants became particularly significant. Needless to say, these were not the same for everyone and were very much shaped by how people understood where they were, where they came from, and where they were heading. Also, for the majority (though not all), the more time they spent in the UK meant that things got easier in a sense that they were positioned better to recognise and take up new opportunities and possibilities in terms of employment, education, housing, healthcare, social contact and so on.



Furthermore, throughout our research people often told us that the first city or town where they lived became important. This was where they had established meaningful community networks and access to important social support. Gebre, for instance, explained that *'as a refugee, the first city you settle in is your home town. You accept it as your home town'*. This point is important for dispersal policies, as relocations may often feel not only disruptive, but also they may have the opposite impact of what integration policies hope to achieve. We already saw how this impacted Oumar when he was moved from one city to another. Anything that may interrupt newly established connections and routines may feel disturbing, and potentially make 'living the weathers' feel more apparent and exacerbated.

The location of accommodation for people recently given an immigration status, whether they arrived in the UK independently or through a resettlement programme, ideally would offer these three kinds of places to meet an individuals' needs and wants. So for example, whether a certain area has a shop that enables a person to buy familiar food, or enough opportunities for meaningful employment, or activities that would enable them to practise English.

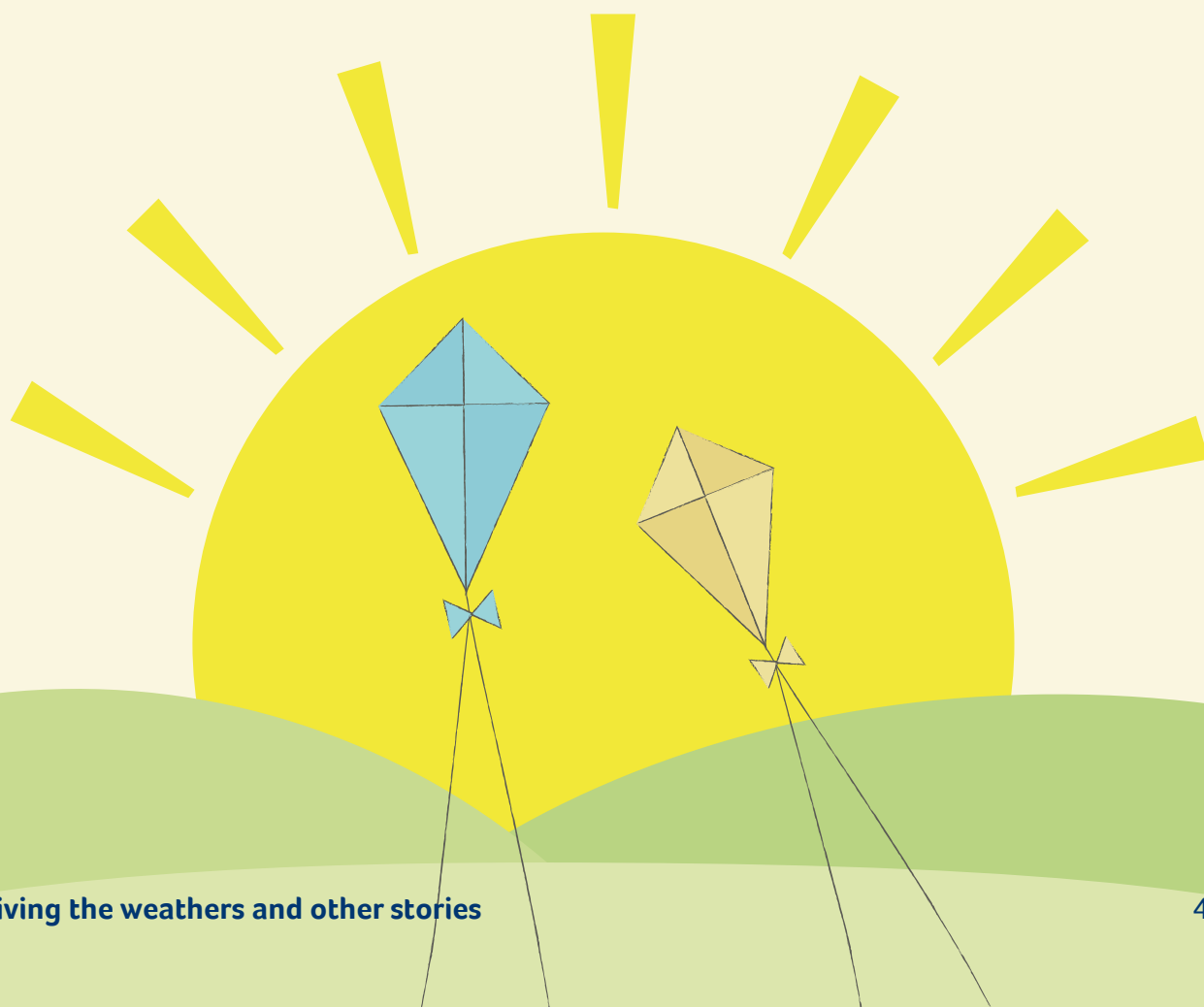
Formal recognition of critical social spaces

It is comforting to see that community-based organisations, faith-based groups, cafés, restaurants and co-nationals offer crucial support in different areas that have been identified by the research.

I do however wonder if these critical social spaces receive enough recognition and financial support from the authorities (at local and national level), so that they can keep on playing an important role? In Leeds, for example, there is a church that used to store the 'Ark of Covenant' in a garage during the weekdays and take it to the rented church only for a few hours during weekends, as that is all that they could afford to pay. The people who flock to this church are recognised refugees, asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers, families. It is important that we recognise the work churches and mosques do but I think it is equally important that authorities engage with them and help.

As Gebre testifies, the asylum process system de-humanises the asylum seeker, and it is places like the church that help regain their humanity. We should celebrate the role of such places but this should not gloss over the systemic issues.

A response by Tesfalem Yemane, peer researcher on the RIYH project and doctoral researcher at the University of Leeds



Integration in Yorkshire might include referring to another home or place

Towards the end of a holiday we often feel ready to come home (this is an imperfect tourist analogy). We laugh that holidays are luxurious, yet strangely we feel more relaxed to get home to our favourite chair and familiar food, and express ourselves without having to struggle to find the right vocabulary. How often do we observe that Brits abroad seek out familiar food or drink, or socialise with people from their own country?

One of the revelatory moments for me when reading this research was hearing from refugees that remembering practices, places and people not in the UK can actually aid the integration process here. If you can increase your sense of familiarity, bringing some elements of 'home' to the present – by whatever means – it can make the UK feel more homely and can make strange things feel more tolerable. We all crave a sense of familiarity to feel 'at home', and so it makes perfect sense that someone who is new to our community might feel more relaxed if they can continue some practices that are most familiar to them. Not everything about the UK will become meaningful to someone who has not lived their whole life here. Familiarity is relaxing, and so good for healthiness – it is not good to be in a constant state of being on edge or feeling anxious.

How can we put this into practice? A lesson from this report is that someone with a refugee background might be delighted to be asked – with sensitivity – about their country, their family and friends, their pasts. We must take care not to treat people as though they don't have a history, no life before they came to Yorkshire. Let's recognise and celebrate the multiple identities and ties and places that are important to people around us, knowing that this could enhance their sense of familiarity with the UK. Ask someone why a daytrip to Scarborough was so meaningful to them, or why the geranium is their favourite plant, and we might hear some of these stories, understand our new neighbours a little better and thus integrate with them better.

The types of places identified in this research as important to new refugees, the 'know-how' places, the places of familiarity and the 'hope enabling' places, fill me with optimism! They are identifiable and possible in many, many locations. Even one-off visits can have a significant impact. It may help befrienders, advisors, key workers to have these places in mind to identify familiar things that a client might be missing terribly.

**A response to 'Settlement strategies'
by Pip Tyler, Migration Yorkshire**



There is more to be done



I am really pleased to support this important piece of research; it has long been my view that whilst new arrivals into the UK may have many skills and experiences, sometimes including a basic understanding of English, there are still very many barriers to a new arrival feeling settled and comfortable in their surroundings.

The weather analogy is particularly fitting; yes, new arrivals understand the vagaries of UK weather, but don't comprehend what this means and how it will feel and I have seen this being repeated in several different scenarios, not least of which is getting to grips with things such as council tax charges! This is incredibly challenging to overcome and help people to be comfortable and be part of their new communities, which again, is why this report is so very welcome.

Personally, I prefer not to label people as 'refugees', 'asylum seekers' or 'migrant workers' but as citizens of Barnsley who may have been born in another country and have lived within another culture but now, all are 'Barnsley folk' and should be welcomed and encouraged to settle and thrive as such.

Additionally, the report builds on the outcomes of the recent Communities Up Close project which sought to gather the views of new arrivals and established residents as to how they felt about either moving into a new country and culture or from the perspective of resident communities, how they felt about new arrivals and the impact on their community.

Central to the responses were strongly held views that not enough was being done by local agencies to promote the benefits of embracing new arrivals and different cultures and that there should be more opportunities for people from all and every background to mix and get to know each other.

We recognise that there is more that could and should be done in Barnsley and part of our work with the Safer Barnsley Partnership is to promote themes which focus on community and getting to know, and understand, our residents and all their many and varied backgrounds. We work closely with local partners including statutory organisations and voluntary and community sectors and a main strand of this work is to increase awareness of how people feel about their new surroundings and circumstances and what we, as a collective, can do to learn from our differences and, crucially, how we can recognise the similarities we all share as members of the Human Race.

There is, of course, always much more that organisations and individuals can do to create 'better weather' for all who live, work and visit our communities and a personal wish would be for all central and local agencies to be aware of this report and to effect actions to address the real and important challenges that have been raised.

Research that puts the focus on this previously known, but unwritten, challenge to all our communities is to be applauded and senior leaders from relevant organisations should have sight of these findings and asked how they envisage making changes within their realms of responsibility to tackle poor weather and help to change the local climate to warm and welcoming.

**A response by Jayne Wise, Housing and Migration Team Leader,
Safer Neighbourhood Service, Barnsley Council**

6. Methodology

This is a qualitative research project that listened to what people with a refugee background have to say about their views and experiences of ‘integration’ in Yorkshire and Humber. Our overriding objective was to determine how refugees understand and experience integration in their everyday lives in a holistic way, and within this we explored how integration practices vary. Inevitably the background, characteristics and preferences of the individual make a critical difference to what integration looks like for each person. Such variables include country of origin, time in the UK, English language skills, age and sex, health, previous education and employment, family and friends (Cebulla et al 2010). We also considered how formalised approaches to integration contribute to the social cohesion and wellbeing of refugees and relatedly, the potential impacts of national and local policies and practices upon individuals with refugee status who are adapting to life in Yorkshire and Humber. Beyond these strategic or policy led influences, we explored the role that ‘place’ and particular individuals in the local community play in shaping how people settle in.

The impact of Covid-19 on the project

Every research project takes place within a particular context: this one began in January 2019 with Brexit and ended in December 2020 during a pandemic. Inevitably these challenges shaped and restricted the way the project developed beyond our original plans, but we are proud to have been able to complete and share this research to the best of our ability.

The main impacts of the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 and associated restrictions on daily life on the research project were largely practical. We had to halt fieldwork in March 2020 (when the first UK lockdown was enforced) having completed approximately half of our planned face-to-face interviews, and decided not to proceed with further fieldwork for a number of considered reasons, largely in order to minimise risks to both researchers and participants. In addition, we decided that due to the nature of the research and the need to establish trust and rapport, it would not be possible to conduct interviews in an alternative way that could provide data of a comparable quality. As a consequence, our interviewee sample was less diverse than we had anticipated, since we had only just begun to fill gaps in the range of characteristics among the group of interviewees.

The unexpected benefit of this curtailment was that our peer researcher colleagues became more involved in the analysis and development of the findings than originally planned, although online analysis meetings were not a perfect replacement for in-person discussion.

Reflective biographies of the report authors

The research team included two Migration Yorkshire researchers (Čelebičić and Tyler), a team of seven peer researchers (Abusalah, Agbokou, Bashar, Batebou, Irandoust, Obse, and Yemane), with support and advice from three researchers at the Universities of Salford and Huddersfield (Brown, Martin and Walkey). The whole research team contributed to the research design, while fieldwork and analysis were conducted by Čelebičić with different configurations of peer researchers. This report was written by Čelebičić with contributions from Tyler, Agbokou, Obse, Wise and Yemane.

Qualitative researchers prioritise depth of meaning and understanding in their work, rather than claiming objectivity, 'truth' or certainty. It is commonly understood to be good practice where researchers reflect on their own position in a research project with an awareness of how they influenced the development of the project and the findings, so that the reader is aware of some of the ways in which the conclusions of the research have been influenced. This section is a short discussion drawing on the reflections of some of the research team on their own positionality.

Vanja, the principal researcher

My interest in migration is both professional and personal. From a professional point of view, I have been interested in 'people' and 'movement' for over 12 years. Much of this time I worked with people who were dreaming of migrating, though due to strict border regimes, were unable to do so. As a consequence they often felt stuck. For the past three years I have worked with people who managed to move, across many borders, in search for a better life. Despite this, and for a very different set of reasons, they too at times felt stuck. My professional interests were, in many ways, sparked by my personal trajectory: being myself a migrant in different geographical locations and with different statuses (refugee, student and working migrant). These experiences placed the intricacies relating to movement, place, space and temporality at the very heart of my intellectual and personal endeavours. I have learned to observe how my personal experiences are similar as well as very different from the experiences of the individuals and families I came across through my research and work. Because of all this, migration never stops being interesting, or important, to me.

My role on the project was to lead on the research and work closely with peer researchers, and Pip, the project manager. I felt that this collaboration has shaped the research in numerous important ways. Pip's close-knit familiarity with the project, on the one hand, and her reduced day-to-day involvement on the other, enabled her to regularly contribute with valuable and essential comments and insights. The peer researchers, who brought with them direct knowledge of the topic as is the case with peer research more broadly, all joined this project with a very diverse set of skills, education levels and personal trajectories that go far beyond the mere experience of having held refugee status. From my point of view, it was this diversity that added vital and dynamic strength to the project. At the same time though, this diversity occasionally also posed some challenges, since some peer researchers already had a significant knowledge of research-related practices, while others did not. This collaboration, as the research itself, was and still is an important and inspiring learning curve.

Getachew, a peer researcher

As a peer researcher my experience on positionality in the RIYH project is starting from the recruitment of the participants. When we were recruiting the participants once they knew the interviewer was a refugee they were more comfortable. In my own experience during the discussion with the recruited participant the first question they raised was 'what is the purpose of the project?' Then after I briefed them regarding the aim and the outcome of the project, they felt comfortable and willing to be interviewed. During the interview most participants were relaxed enough to respond any questions without fear. Most of the time we conducted the interview jointly, and once they were briefed about us they gave their consent to be interviewed.

When I was conducting the interview, participants felt safe and secure once they knew I have similar experiences like them. My observation during the interview is the interviewee felt confident or perceived that I (the interviewer) understand his/her feeling and emotion - sometimes, they used the phrase 'You know it' or 'You know about it' that means they feel that we know their feeling and understand their stories.

Akosiwa, a peer researcher

As a person with a refugee status, and a peer researcher on a project exploring ways for a better integration in the region, I felt I had an 'insider relationship' with participants. Not only did that create an extra passion and interest for the job, but it also gave me reasons to encourage participation. Although my position on the research empowered me to comfortably talk about some issues or topics on behalf of people I share an experience and/or a status with, it also led me, especially during the interview process, to fail to explore some areas further as I assumed I understood what the interviewees meant simply because I can identify with them.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret patterns and meanings in the data. Together with our senior researchers, we decided on how to categorise quotes; and by so doing, we were able to identify themes, topics, ideas and patterns that come up repeatedly. In some instances we had different views and opinion about peoples' experiences, what they said, how they said it and what it meant to us. From those discussions, and based on our perspectives, many themes that may probably have not been seen, emerged and some more light was thrown on other aspects of refugees' integration process.

I have come to realise how different our journeys and circumstances are, and how, as a result not everything means the same thing to each individual with refugee status. For that reason a peer researcher may not be too much of an insider in every cases in the sense that there will always be areas where their knowledge of the topic might be limited. However, I believe peer researcher's involvement remains important and has brought a different perspective to the whole RIYH project.

Pip, the project manager

My role on the project has been to shape it rather than 'do' the research, and I have an overall responsibility for its success. Undoubtedly, working with peer researchers changed the way that the project unfolded in many valuable ways. Some important learning points from working with peer researchers for me were confirmation that refugees do not necessarily have social networks that include other known refugees, and that not all barriers to participation in research can be overcome through working with peer researchers.

Having worked in the field of migration for some years, I have an understanding of some of the issues facing new arrivals to a country. Working to support local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber on a plethora of migration issues from statistics to research to policy means I am constantly considering that context and how council officers and service providers might be interested in or affected by migration issues and by extension, this research. This greatly influenced my contributions to shaping the research project overall, and perhaps results in an emphasis on the potential learning and applications to practice. As such, my commentary sections of this report are primarily based on my reactions to the fieldwork findings in terms of potential implications for people working on migration issues.



Data collection and analysis

[\(see accompanying infographic\)](#)

Fieldwork took place over six month period between September 2019 and March 2020. The study comprised a qualitative methodology consisting of 51 semi-structured interviews with people of a refugee background who were living in Yorkshire and Humber.

Our sampling strategy was to begin with English-speaking interviewees whom the peer researchers knew or could recruit through their own networks, preferably from nationalities that have been more commonly granted refugee status in our region over the past 20 years. We planned to subsequently move on to unfamiliar interviewees via support organisations, perhaps in non-English languages and in more distant locations. Most (39) interviewees were recruited using the known contacts of peer researchers, as well as through contacts of Migration Yorkshire researchers and partner organisations in the voluntary and community sector (12). Most participants (37) agreed to draw a picture during the interview to illustrate a dimension of their experience they wanted to share.

The profile of research participants was as follows:

- The ages of interviewees ranged between 13-64 years (22 were aged 36-45, 12 were aged 25-35, 8 under 25 years, 7 were over 46 years).
- 31 participants identified as men, 20 as women.
- Participants covered 23 countries of origin, crossing Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. 33 interviewees came from an African country.
- Interviewees had spent up to 27 years in the UK (year of arrival in the UK spanned 1992-2019). Most had arrived in the last 6 years and the mode year was 2017.
- The most common household type was a family group (38 interviewees), followed by people living alone or in shared houses with friends.
- Participants had gained refugee status most commonly through the asylum process (33), followed by through a resettlement programme (10), as well as family reunion (6) and under the Dubs amendment (1), with some changing status after arriving in the UK for a different purpose.
- At the time of interview, participants were living in one of 9 local authority areas in Yorkshire and Humber, almost half in Leeds (25 in Leeds, 6 in North Yorkshire and in Huddersfield, 4 in Bradford, 3 in North Lincolnshire, 2 in Calderdale, in Wakefield and in Sheffield, and 1 in Hull).
- Participants had received a range of education, from four years of schooling to further degrees. Almost half told us they held a university degree.
- Similarly, there was a rich mix of public, private and third sector backgrounds among interviewees, demonstrating a mix of UK work experience as well as prior to arriving here. The most common professions mentioned by interviewees were education, finance, charity work and community development.

Most interviews (46) were co-delivered, undertaken by one peer researcher with support from a principal researcher (Čelebičić). Co-delivered interviews ranged from being mainly led by Čelebičić to mainly led by the peer researcher. A further 5 solo interviews were conducted by peer researchers alone.

Interviews were conducted in five different languages: 28 were in English only, 9 in Arabic, 6 in Tigrigna, 2 in French, 1 in Amharic, and in 5 cases a mix of languages were employed during a single interview. Interviews conducted in a language other than English at times involved some translation by the peer researcher for the benefit of the co-interviewer.

During interviews, research participants were asked questions on the following topics:

- Places that are meaningful in the area of residence
- Any moves within the UK
- What helped coping with life in the UK as a new arrival
- What could improve daily life
- A typical day in the UK, and a typical day in a country of previous residence
- Surprises in the UK upon arrival
- Advice to those planning to come to the UK and for settling in
- Happiest moments in the UK
- Differences for men and women
- Understandings of terms such as ‘refugee’ and ‘integration’

Interviews conducted in a language other than English were translated by a peer researcher or a professional translator. All interviews were transcribed then coded in a spreadsheet format to identify and collate common themes linked to the research questions and that arose from the data itself. A thematic analysis was undertaken which involved discussions between different iterations of the research team members.

In this report we outline some of the key findings through a selective focus on the experiences of a few people. By presenting in some detail the experiences research participants decided to share with us through - at times, lengthy - quotations, we expose readers to some of the deeper insights into their world, to illustrate the points we make. These were always carefully chosen as the best representation of issues that were raised by most of our research participants. Along the way, insights were presented to the RIYH Board and to the regional Refugee Advisory Group for further feedback. The final research findings were written by Čelebičić, with contributions from other members of the research team in selected parts of the report.

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8. Acknowledgements

'Living the weathers and other stories' was written by Dr Vanja Čelebičić, with contributions from Dr Pip Tyler, Akosiwa Agbokou, Getachew Obse, Jayne Wise and Tesfalem Yemane.

We are very grateful to those individuals who helped and contributed throughout the process of this research project. In particular, we thank:

- Our research participants for their time, their trust, and for sharing their stories and experiences with us
- The peer researchers for moulding this research project and contributing to it, each one in their own unique way
- Our colleagues at Migration Yorkshire for always helping, and by various means
- Organisations in Yorkshire and Humber who introduced us to some of the research participants
- Colleagues at the University of Huddersfield and the University of Salford for support they provided throughout the project
- Various partner organisations for posing useful questions and comments during our board meetings.

'Living the weathers and other stories' was completed in 2021.

Disclaimer

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Migration Yorkshire and in no way reflect the views of the funder, the European Commission or the United Kingdom Responsible Authority (UKRA). Neither the European Commission nor UKRA is liable for any use that may be made of the information in this publication.

Appendix

A: Quotations from research participants about the word 'refugee'

We asked people what the word 'refugee' brings to mind. Below you can read quotes of what all those we asked that question had to say about it.

Lonely, sense of belonging

By Anita

Official person

By Faheem

Someone who wants protection

By Adamo

Poverty ... [refugee] brings to mind instability ... because when they gave you the refugee status for the first time they will tell that they next when they have to renew it will not depend on your story ... so you stay five years without any control of your life, that's why I say this is instability for me. You cannot rebuilt your life in that five years. You don't know if you will stay here or you go back to your own country. What can I do in order to stay here or to give myself more chance. You are powerless, those are circumstances you cannot change'

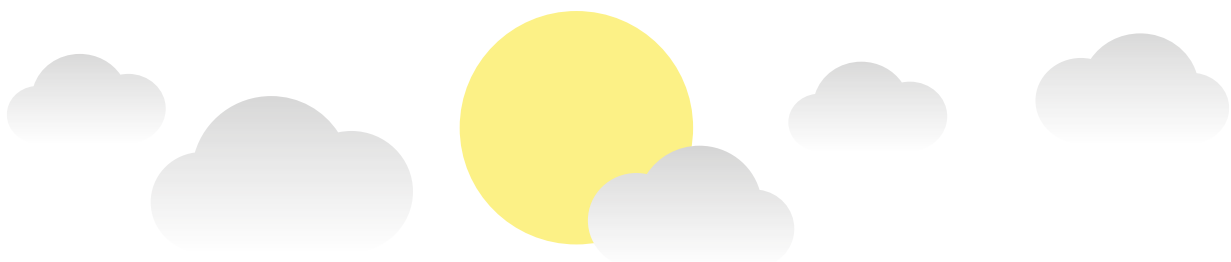
By Yann

For me, the word refugee has no connotation. It's depends on who says, because by definition I am here I am not British and I am not in my country. I have the right to cross the border and live where I can live, right for everyone. But some people, when they say it, they want to put you down... by saying refugee that means you are not from this country

By Hiba

Refugees are people that run away actually, from hard situations and looking for new situation, new chance to life. They potentially have bad things and good things. I think it depends on the government that use the good thing or the bad

By Mabel



...refugee is not a choice. Nobody pursue to settle their life in another country without any proper reason, there is definitely a reason and it could be different... you know that you are going to be a refugee that means you have left your motherland for the security of whatever you say, and you settle yourself in a different country, different place with different people, different society. So all I am saying is different. Even though you have settled yourself among other people, like among other human beings, but all different...if someone is not very good in the language like English ... it could be a nightmare, everywhere you would find nightmare because of the language.... [even if] you know how to speak English ... you don't know how the process, how it works, you don't have that ground knowledge so you will find it very difficult and that difficulty makes you vulnerable and makes you scared [when you] don't know how it works, it make you scared. I think this kind of little difficult things make a refugee very scared. They feel very down, they feel very depressed...[As a refugee] You should have tolerance I would say. You should have tolerance, the capacity to tolerate many things...

By Nadif

Financial and emotional difficulties ... Refugee, he has a lot of problem ahead so that he can pass by them and assimilate to the community where he is intending to settle. It's not an easy process to get refuge. And I believe this is not limited to the UK. Don't put the blame only on UK.

By Abdo

Human being

By Ammar

I do not have freedom in my country

By Darius

Struggle, leaving your home or being forced to leave your home, strange as in environment, as in surrounding, culture because you've left your home obviously you know, and lifestyle is obviously changing, and the future could be prosperous and also uncertain

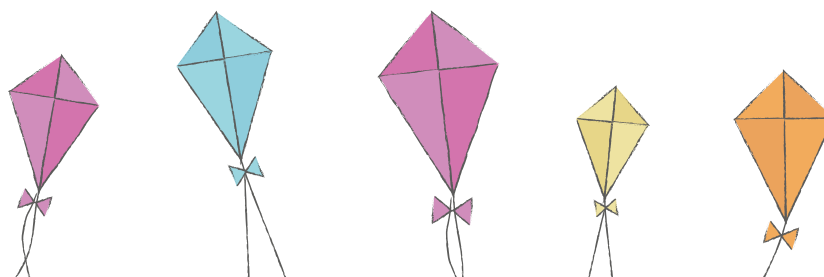
By Haris

Struggle

By Jean

I don't even like the word refugee because it's undefined. You may not like it when someone tells you are a refugee, but at the same time you are not in your country. You wouldn't want it because a refugee is someone who leaves one country to another for better life ... Some people don't like talking to refugee people, they don't want to associate with them

By Oumar



Now that I start knowing the meaning I feel more relaxed about it. Before when I hear the word refugee I just say people with nothing, people very low, you are asking for refuge, you are begging and those kind of stuff. But by the time I got my status, I began to see the way they are now viewing it with those who don't have refugee status you can't, so it now put some kind of oh, there is some kind of cap of respect for those who's been asking for refuge and those who actually recognise them as and they hold some kind of power I don't know to certain stuff they are allowed to do. But before that when I just hear the word refugee it just sound to me like oh those people in the danger, people with no life, people that are dying, people that are seeking ... I don't want to be a self-pity person

By Priti

It's a frustrating word to begin with.... word brings discrimination or it brings distinction between people that were born here and those who came to seek shelter or refuge. So you see, when we talk about refuge or shelter, we see people who flee their country because of issues straightaway... It brings inequality... you feel destitute, you feel like a person with so value, a person with no importance in the community so that's it. You feel inferior and even the children don't like it. For that reason, I remember my son always asking me not to mention to people that I have a refugee status, whenever I am taking a walk with them. And when you ask him, he will rather say they came here from France just to avoid the embarrassment

By Serene

Refugee is like a word that puts you down, someone who is looked down upon...someone who is not considered, someone who always needs help, someone who needs "first aid", I don't know, but it doesn't sound well...when it's said Yohan is a refugee, you could see everything going down, all down. You see, have you felt that? It's just an appellation. That appellation brings you down, I don't know whether this word can be changed to another. I don't really know if it can be changed. You can be rich in your country but issues can make you become a refugee somewhere. People will call you refugee and you might think "these people don't know me", but the truth is that you are a refugee for the time being



By Yohan

Help, saving, reasons...there is a reason why they are refugees. There could be their background, war, where they come from, the day when they leave. And sometimes it is people's opinion...I don't think that is the right or appropriate term to call me. I mean it is right that I came as a refugee but I am also a human like them. If they were a refugee I wouldn't call them 'oh you are refugee' and stuff like that. I would say their name because I don't feel it's appropriate. That's my own opinion, people might think differently

By Amina

Judgment, people judge without understanding what people have been through ... it is more about respect, you have to respect someone and say their name but at the end of the day I know I am a refugee so I won't make a big deal out of it if you called me this you know. I will be like just call me by my name and that's it, story over.

By Aamira

I see a community of people who are poor with very few resources and struggling because the whole community itself is ... destitute because maybe their asylum had been refused and they need to make fresh claim and all that and they are depending on their friends who most likely will be refugees themselves, yeah the people who come from the same place. And I also see people who are resourceful and many of them who are very well educated from different places, many who left good jobs and most of the people who actually make it. Those who have been well-off in other places or have had means where they come from. And I see people who just find themselves unable to practice their craft. You have doctors who find out their qualifications are not recognised when they get here. You find people who are maybe lawyers and engineers or all sort who did business but when they get here they find it that it is all very different. That's a refugee, and then it's a community basically

By Declan

Seeking safety

By Zamir

Strange people

By Mazaa

I don't like that word. Belongingness. Like not belong to here. There is un-belongingness

By Miriam

I hear that there are a few British who misconstrue the refugee as someone who is less capable and less competitive. You know, they look down on you. We know we are refugees, and we are proud of that. We know that we are entitled to the refugee rights and what they say about us does not put us down... Generally, no one is intentionally excluded or isolated because of their refugee status. You know you have your right and are equal before the law. So, I bear the term refugee with pride

By Kidane

I feel bad about the word 'refugee'. I think there is a negative feeling about it. A refugee means to leave behind your country and your family. You are in exile, and you always remind yourself that you are a refugee even though you are safe. Yes, we have come to seek safety, but I always feel bad about the word

By Senait

I am happy when I hear of the word refugee. I say that in comparison to being an asylum seeker. Being a refugee, to me, is being able to travel to any city, being able to be with anyone I want and being able to do any job I like. It is freedom. Getting a refugee status also meant that I will not be deported to the regime in Eritrea. It gave me certainty

By Eyob

Someone who has to apply for benefits. You have to find a house because you will be evicted from your G4S accommodation. You have more responsibility... Your Asylum Support stops in page days after getting your refugee status. So you have to find a solution. I have three children, you know. And I cannot find a job in that time. But of course there a positive side to this. You are allowed to seek employment. You are free.

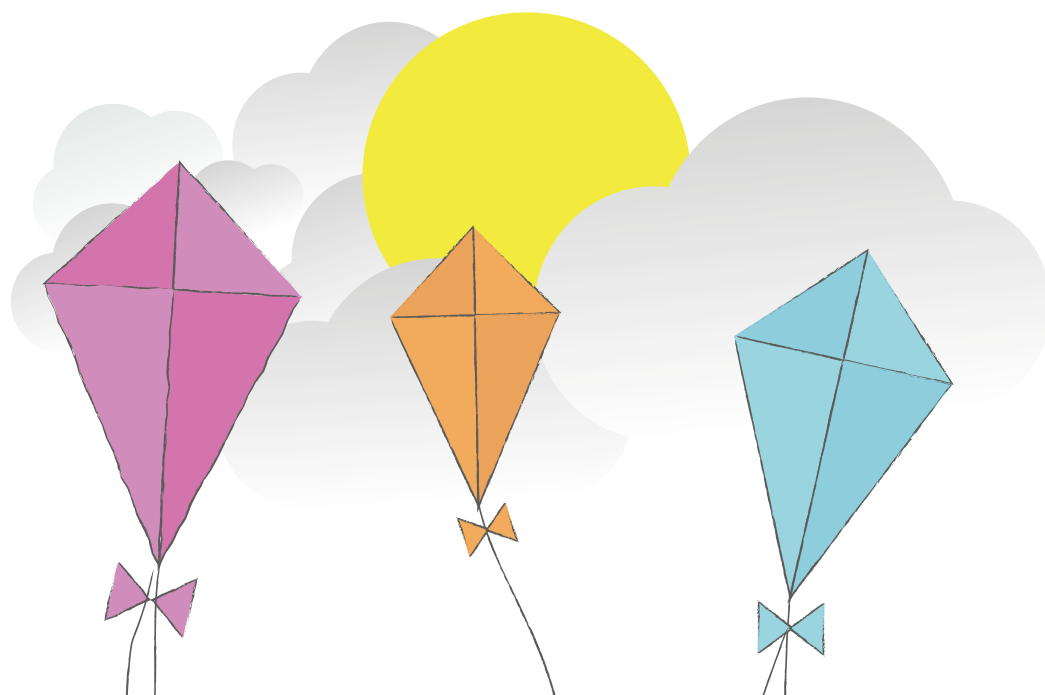
By Abia

When I hear of the word 'refugee', I think [what is meant] is a person who has migrated because of economic problems only. I do not like this narrative, because if you take our case for example, our country is endowed with natural resources that are more than capable of feeding our people. And we have very industrious and hardworking people, as you know it. We should be offering sanctuary to others, not emptying it unabatedly. But we're leaving our country because of the system. I should also mention that the British society deserves our gratitude for offering sanctuary to many people from many countries... I [still] see myself as a refugee. It does not go away from you. Yes, as a British citizen, you have every right but the label is always there. It affects you. So, I wish we have all the rights in our country

By Biniam

I think the word 'refugee' invokes in people's imagination the damned other in dire situation. A person who does not know what to do, who is incapable and dependent... Personally it does not bother me. I am not concerned about the word. I just have to do what I have to. It does not worry me at all

By Ephrem



Unfortunate.... When people see in your ID that you are a refugee, they think that you're somehow inferior to non-refugees. They think that you're always dependent and a parasite. I do not like the term. Yes, I am a refugee but I have not come here because I had nothing to it. I had enough in my family. But I could not see my future in my own country. I would not come here if I had the freedom to lead a normal life in my country. But I was made an object of the regime, and had to leave...the label does not go away with the time...I now have got my Indefinite Leave to Remain, and I was shocked to see that they have put a 'refugee' on it. Why do they still call you a 'refugee' if you have Indefinite Leave to Remain here? You know, the tag remains with you. I did not expect that. For whatever reason, you have come here and your asylum case is assessed properly. And on that basis, you have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain. Why do they need to write 'refugee' then? Why not write 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'? I am human, not a refugee. In fact, if you think about it, we're all refugees in this world. We're going to die tomorrow. Honestly, if you think about it, we're going to leave this world. The person who wrote the 'refugee' label is a refugee in this world. Why the separation? Why this categorization? So, you asked me if I think the label goes away. My answer is, it does not.

By Fresalem

The world 'refugee' evokes an image of a person who has lost everything, including his/her country and who works hard to integrate into a new society. The refugee is constructed as the damned and wretched figure. People who seek protection should be considered as people, not labelled with all these names such as refugees or migrants that only contribute to rubbing the wounds. The term is often used by the general public, politicians and the media to present refugees as alien, poor and those who migrate for economic reasons only, hence in search of green pastures. The word can be easily manipulated to securitize migration

By Gebre

Danger ... to me personally, the challenge is how to go to academia. Because wherever I go, they ask, 'there is three months, four months break/gap in your career.' And when you say I was an asylum seeker, this is stuff is not academically interesting. It really does not matter how many publications you have or how brilliant you were in your studies. This is a matter of fact that people have a sort of preconception/judgement about the world 'asylum/refugee'. This may break your 30-year CV if you put the word refugee in the first line.

By Hooman

This question is hard. I think refugee in this country means someone who is new. There is a difference between being a refugee and being a British [citizen]. For example, if you're a British, you can fly anywhere, to any country. You do not ask for visa to go to any country. Even in schools, they make fun of them if they [refugees] are from refugee families

By Se'are

When I used to hear about the word refugee before I became a refugee, it meant shame and shy. That is how we were brought up in Lebanon. After becoming a refugee, I am the same person, so I started to feel upset about myself for viewing any refugees wrongly before...We learned in Lebanon that refugees are people who are coming to steal our land. In Lebanon, Israelis, Palestinians used to come as refugees and we were scared of people stealing our land. When I came here and became a refugee, I did not come to steal anything. I am a person who is seeking

the help and protection. Now, I wish to say sorry to everyone I misinterpreted

By Shanifa

Refugee is being far away from your home country. A very difficult feeling. As a refugee even if you live a decent life, still you feel not quite comfortable

By Jamila

When I heard the word refugee from someone else it gives me an impression 'not nice'

By Suleyman

I do not like the word refugee

By Asim

Immigration is difficult. The person goes away, but there are things that fill in the emptiness caused by immigration; things that are positive...What I have noticed in the UK, a refugee is like everyone else. There is no discrimination. There are no different options for refugees and citizens. You don't feel like you have been denied an option. Everyone is the same

By Iman

It is a hardship. [before] You could spend the evening at your sister's, or your parents', but now everyone is far away

By Amira

It is good because of the help you get and the people that help you. Not good because of some people, they do not like refugees

By Farid

I see it as positive. This country is providing humanitarian help to refugees. It is a human thing that they did

By Rima

This word is heavy, very heavy... it means that you can't go back to your country; that there is a problem in your country; and that every moment you are being reminded of what was happening in your country...[refugee means] new life and difficult life.

By Yara

B: Quotations from research participants about the word ‘integration’

We asked people what the word ‘integration’ brings to mind. Below you can read quotes of what all those who were familiar with the word had to say about it.

Acceptance, effort

By Anita

I don't think there is integration... It is like a relationship or the community without a difference. But I feel difference, I feel like people will neglect you, or it is very hard to be together, beside the colour, beside the differences

By Miriam

You have to interact with people and allow them to interact with you, get friends and know people more

By Faheem

How to become part of the new community

By Adamo

I will say that it's about matter of time the integration...it's depends on the strength of the individual who is going through that, I mean mental strength. If it's someone who is really strong and open minded he can easily integrate himself you know. And it depends also on people you will meet

By Yann

English language is the main factor facilitating integration. Because of that, I think according to the strategy in place right now, learning of English, especially when it comes to integrate, so in order to facilitate integration and make life easier for people who come, I think you need to revisit the way people are taught English here. It has to come very early, at a very early stage so people can integrate

By Hiba

Integration is how to mix these people to the society. So if they educate them, they will try to learn the values of the new society, the things that are important to the new society, and they will teach these people these things and make them ready to serve the new society and have some responsibility in the new society, they can integrate it better

By Mabel

Integration is difficult, you need to have an open mind and support, get out there as in seek information, seek help, seek help do not close yourself in. Surround yourself with people that are friends and family, work hard and keep on top of thing

By Haris

Flexible

By Jean

Integration is to adapt your life to the new country. They won't change their style of life because of you. You need to adapt, you move there so you need to try to do like they are doing. I am not telling you to change everything but you need to do the minimum to look like them in terms of looking for job, looking for house and the rule everything, because that's the minimum. You are living in their country and you need to respect some rules. Like you need to do like they are doing

By Murab

It is how to live in a foreign country, it is how to integrate and live well in the community. It is how to settle in the community

By Oumar

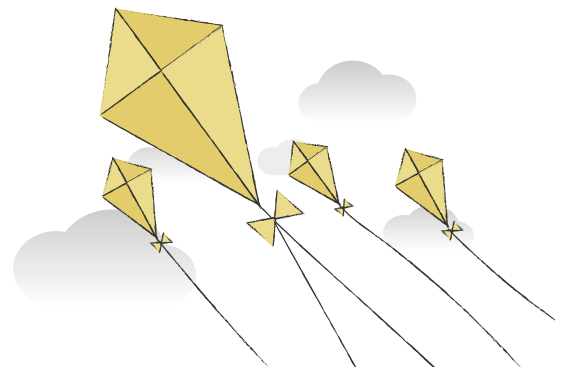
Integration for me is how we connect, integrate, coming together, mixing up with the environment where we are, mixing with people

By Priti

Unlike the word "refugee", "integration" is more soothing

By Serene

As for the word "integration", without thinking I will say I see positivity. By integrating, you see uplifting things. It's something good. We should integrate, be on the same page with what is going on, and be useful and also valued in the community



By Yohan

I would say it's when you are able to live within the wider community and being able to contribute and be both a resource and also work within the wider community. So I would say somebody who is integrated would be able to work, to advance and provide for their own family and their own needs and also to be useful both to their own community and the community in general

By Declan

Integration is blend with the community

By Zamir

Friendship

By Mazaa

Deposit is what comes to my mind when I hear of the word integration. Money to buy furniture through the 'integration loan'. The first time I heard about the word is when I was applying for my integration loan. I was asking, 'what is the meaning of this word? Why is it called integration?' So, I understood then, integration loan means the money that helps you to start a new life and integrate with the community. You know, to buy basic items. Integration is therefore to be part of the community. From integration loan, I learned that the money is to help you start the journey of integration into the society by buying basic necessities

By Abia

I think we, Eritreans, are lagging behind in terms of our connections and interactions with other people. Maybe it is to do with language barriers. Some refugees from other nationalities get into interracial relationships and marriages but this is not common among Eritreans... I think it is because of language barriers and lack of exposure

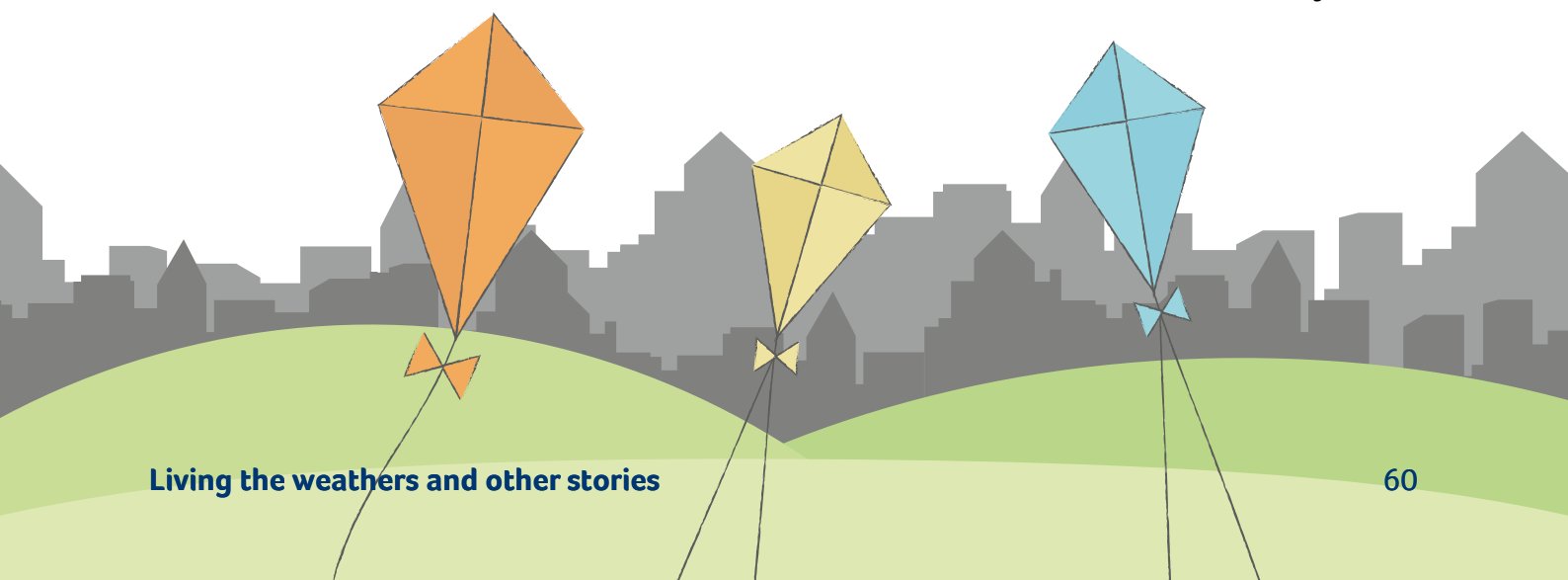
By Biniam

It is imperative to integrate in the new system of the host society. You have to learn the system, adapt to the way of life and learn. If you do not do that, then you will live in permanent ambivalence-neither here nor there. Of course, this should not be at the expense of losing your identity

By Ephrem

Integration is not a one way process. It is a process of give and take. The migrant has contributions to make as much as he has to learn about the host society. Integration does not work if the expectation is for the migrant to first unbecome by deconstructing his identity in order to integrate. From a host society's perspective, I have to accept you and your identity as much as I want you to learn the values, culture and language of the host society. Integration policies should be approached at different levels and scales, for example at local, regional and national levels. We should also avoid the understanding that takes integration as a journey that only starts when a person becomes a refugee. The way the Home Office treats people as they go through the asylum process has a bearing on their future integration. The journey of integration starts from the moment a person arrives here, and efforts should be made to make people feel welcome. There has to be an integrated national picture about integration. For example, there are people who, after being destitute for ten years, get positive decisions. By the time they get their statuses, they will have been traumatized and felt rejected. How do you then suddenly talk of their integration? The views and voices of local authorities who deal with destitution on the ground should be fed into and inform the national integration policy.

By Gebre



Hard

By Hooman

Integration is mixing all the refugees together and make them familiar with a country they do not know. Make them like one family, because when you come to the UK, no one knows if you are a refugee, asylum seeker or a British citizen by mixing them like a salad where we can see different colours but making them like one. It takes time. It is not easy. It is a big job. But we'll reach somewhere

By Shanifa

To get along with all people while trying to build new life. Though this process has its positive and negative aspects. Some people might be friendly and accept you, however some others give you an impression that they do not want you in their life. This applies to every community even to Syrian community back home

By Jamila

C: Quotations from research participants about meaningful places in the UK

We asked people what places were meaningful in their experience of living in the UK. Below you can read quotes of what all those we asked that question had to say about it. We divided them into several sections.

Community Centres

[I did not want to be confined) to the Muslim and Arabic community [only], so I went to Leeds house community... It is the local community club in Woodhouse ok.... it's my focal point to liaise with people other than Muslim... And at that time I've been seeking for a job and I know I have my capabilities of working as an interpreter but actually the cost of having a training course or certification is very high £500 that time, I couldn't afford it. Bearing in mind that I am a single parents I could not work full time...the way to get the credit for translation and interpreting is to volunteer in Woodhouse community centre. And that's what I did. I did about 100 hours community interpretation and at that time I was confident to write my CV that I am an interpreter, I have contributed 100 hours as an interpreter and my referees are from the UK not from Sudan.

By Abdo

There was a community centre that your baby would go and play once a week just to play with other kids, but now they closed it... It was important because other migrants would come and all the community around my house would come, with their kids. We used to chat, you know it was very important for me. Now it is closed... We used to go and play and sometimes there are letters and numbers for kids. They will know their environment because when they go to school at three it is not strange for them

By Miriam

The community centre in Little London I go there because I have lessons, this is beneficial for me... there are classes but there is no company. I like company...in Ebor Gardens Community Centre I go to meet Syrian community, Syrian ladies, to talk, gathering, enjoy coffee, and talking, if I have a letter that I needed to understand, or there is something that I do not understand, to register... they do it all for us

By Amira

Upper Garden, Syrian community centre [is important]... Before we would just meet together, just talk and spend time together; but now sometimes I work with them as volunteer

By Yara

Women's centre is important to me for social connections, and to practice English

By Jamila

Place that I will never forget is also the Sure Start Centre in Beeston. It was a recreational/activities centre for children and a socializing place for us [adults]. It has now been changed into a charity, I think. They [staff] there were very caring. They were asking us if we had any problems. This is the place I received great support and learned a lot

By Senait

Community-based charity organisation/network

The Enterprise Centre and St Augustine's Centre, they help refugees and asylum seekers

By Alea

PAFRAS, they are important... they help people with asylum...you can also volunteer there...i worked there in the kitchen... I volunteer because I don't want to waste my time. If you stay like that and not do anything, it's not good.

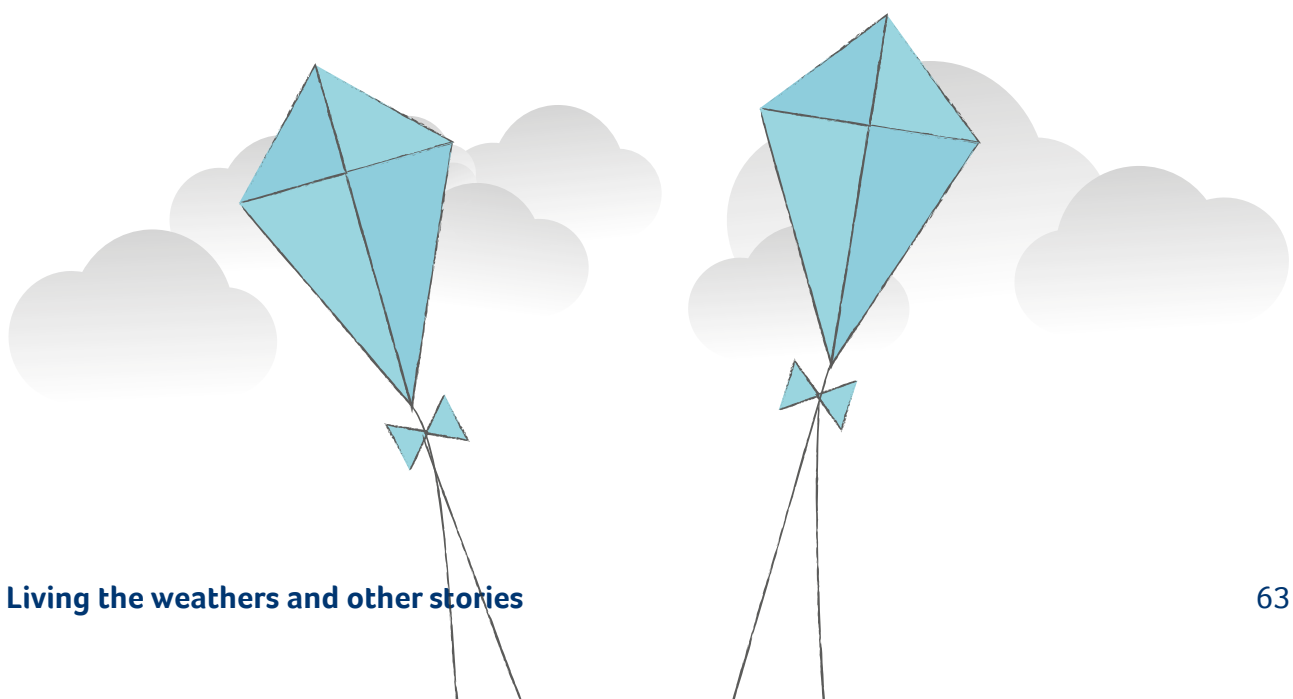
By Adamo

Little London community centre, I worked with the Afghan community [there] and I found it very helpful and a positive place for me. I found a lot of good friends from there and useful friend to support me in lots of things like when I had my children issue. They supported in this kind of things and it makes me calm always as they are all next to me

By Maya

Red Cross makes you feel you are at home despite all the problems as I am a caseworker. So by finding many people from different countries, different colours, some with scarfs and others with no scarfs, it is nice to feel yourself. I feel I belong to someone, even they are not from your country, but you feel you're not the only person who feel you do not belong to everyone. When I come to university, I do not meet any Lebanese. But by finding someone from Palestine, he is my neighbour, he speak the same language as me. Or when I sit on the table, I find ladies wearing scarfs, so I say, 'I can sit on the table?' So, all of us know we belong to something-language, colour, cloth or something. So that's why I mention places like these. For example, garden is for everyone. No one will saying 'excuse me, it is not your table. It's not yours.' So it's nice place, and everyone is welcome. No one will be kicking you out

By Shanifa



There was a specific place that was really good for me called PAFRAS. We were guided and well taken care of. They helped us register with the GP, showed us places where we can relax and have fun and that include the gym and other fun places. From time to time they take us round to show us Leeds. If it wasn't for those initiatives, I wouldn't have been able to know Leeds this much all by myself. PAFRAS was the ideal place for me... I used to go there when I was an asylum seeker, and even after I was granted a refugee status. I kept going there to encourage other asylum seekers and give them hope the same way PAFRAS did it for me when I was in the [asylum] process. I used to tell other asylum seekers not to lose hope but to remain strong. I did this because my status was granted six months from when I arrived in the UK. There were people in the process long before I came but they were still there when I left. And, as that place gave me a lot of support I deemed it necessary to go back and do the same for those who are still waiting. So, that was my way of volunteering. And that prevented me from staying at home doing nothing; so, I wasn't only helping or supporting others but I was helping myself as well.

By Yohan

I also attend a social group called BIASAN which most people who are refugees will know ...[I am] going there to meet with people and also to support people. There may be different people who will come there and they feel that maybe this is a good community to be associated with, so I think there is quite a lot of people who will come for different reasons and obviously as it has volunteers who will help with chatting with people for them to learn more, to improve their English. So I think if I am there I am sort of helping out and I am also chatting with people and making friends.

By Declan

[Also] refugee community organisations, basically I think after the church that's my second best...I think we do have some periodic meetings that we have like Bradford Refugee Forum. I've been involved with them for over 10 years now. Also Red Cross where sometimes I go to meet some newly arrivals so basically those organisation that support Refugees and asylum seekers like BIASAN every Thursday so I like going down there and meeting people and talking to people and maybe also looking for opportunities to make some difference to individuals there... I understand some migrant health issues ... to come to the United kingdom, it's a long journey and as a result they are exposed to so many things along the way but by the time they get in here they don't even know what they are carrying in their bodies. So basically I've been working on public health, working with asylum seekers trying to encourage them to make use of the health services available. So these opportunities that I have with these organisations helped me really to talk to people and find out about their experiences and also encourage them to make use of the health services around... I feel like I have some information which they do not have ...so I have to find ways of prompting them to make use of these services

By Winston

In my past experience for me a very important places are charity organizations, they are helpful...I came in the UK in 2012 and in the same year my claim for asylum was refused...So I went the Upper Tribunal Court and the Court also refused my claim...So I lost my accommodation and I lost my support. At that time a charity organization ... helped me to get accommodation. I also got £ 20 from this organisation. They do have a welcoming centre for migrants who don't have jobs, so they are supporting us.

By Badri

[what was helpful was to have] someone I can talk to and finding our way and working on trying to find school...like my son, he was eight months with me and I don't know where to go, who to communicate and everything, so charities they helped me a lot. You know how to access and where to go...[it was]mostly DASH, they are very useful but there is another one Elim Church, called 611, they were also very good but I chose between two because there are always lots of people, a queue to see so always I chose which one has less queue. You know we have to be early because there are a lot people that need help, to talk to, because they really give you 100 percent attention. They talk on behalf of you. They have all the phone numbers who to ask and all those things and that was very important. I think in every way starting from small things, like giving us things for children like clothes, food and toys

By Mazaa

[Charity organizations] They are very important. RETAS Leeds helped me a lot. I was part of the summer family trips organized by RETAS. It gave me the opportunity to know and make friends with many people. RETAS also gave me volunteering opportunity. On top of that, their information, advice and guidance (IAG) is very helpful. You can get really important information. For example, Clare (pseudonym of an advisor in RETAS) helped me a lot. My children love sport; and Clare told me about gym centres where I can take them. PAFRAS helped me with legal aid and my application for free bus pass for my children. The school my children were going was not in my area. It took an hour to get there. And I could not afford to buy bus passes. PAFRAS also helped me find someone to listen to me and my worries when I was, you know. That was for the mental health therapy

By Abia

Places of worship

Since I arrived here I have been strongly linked to Leeds grand mosque... that helped me a lot to find friends and find my way in Leeds Muslim community because I knew some people from different nationalities from Syria, from Sudan and from Morocco, they helped me a lot. Most of the time when I go to grand mosque, it's during Ramadan and that has been really helpful.

By Abdo

The Wakefield Baptist church, that place is like a home to me, it's a community. That was the place I met people who transformed my life. You know, When I, as an asylum seeker, sorry I am diverting a little bit now; when I got a place in where I am now. Because I had this faith that it's God I know, that Sunday morning, like the next morning I had to look for a place of fellowship where I could see people. I don't want to go too far because if I don't have money, transport fare, I can't go for worship. So that morning I didn't know where I was going, I just took my boy, he was three months old with the pram I started walking and along the way, I saw the church it says Wakefield Baptist church, I said ok, let's go and see what's going on here. And the moment I step my feet there, that was the transformation of my life. Yeah, that's very important to me.

By Priti

Church is important for me because I went through so much in Africa, especially when I lost my husband, so drawing closer to God is where we find peace. So it's really important to me because listening to the word of God soothes and reassures me...I only go there to pray. I can also say that it's like a family to me because I am here with my children and there is no one from my country around here so church is the only place I can meet people with whom I can share. I don't have family here except my two children.

By Serene

[Church is important because] it is a spiritual enrichment and that's what I can call it, so it is important

By Declan

[Church is important because] I spend most of my Sunday, or the whole of my Sunday, at church because that's where really, I think for me it's more like a spiritual therapy. Yes it is quite important for me

By Winston

The church also gave me the opportunity to meet new friends. People were praying for me. They knew about my pain. The church is indeed a very important place that helped me to make lasting friendship with some people. For example, I met my best friend in the church. He is a British citizen who has played a critical role in my life in this country... It is a long story. Having grown up in church, I attach great importance to the role of the church in my faith, my identity and my principles as a person. The church helps me guide my daily life in the right way. Everyone, believers or non-believers, Christians or Muslims are all my brothers and sisters regardless of their faiths. But the church also plays special importance to me personally. It is a safe place that I can perform emotional and spiritual reflection. It is a place of psychological security

By Gebre

We can't do without church and church family ... it is important because we have a lot of common things. Our belief and our hopes are the same, we live for our values. You know that will connect us. If we are not in the same country and we didn't grow up together. There is the culture and we believe the same God and we read the same bible. That helps to connect people... I think for us and for our family that is very important. When we were back home that was our belief and our value system, what we want to pass to our children. That was very important. I was worried if I couldn't find that that what will happen in my life because you know when you come to the new country you don't know. Will you really find what you really value, and what's really important for your life, or not

By Mazaa

For me Church is an important place... very important. For me a place where I pray, have a fellowship with my God and with the people who serve God come to the church. You know the fellowship is very important. It is very important from all places. I love to go to church.

By Miriam

[Mosque is important] because our house is far from town. So, we don't get the chance to pray in it. And, therefore, whenever we are near town, we carry out all prayers there. That is why the mosque is very important, it gives me the chance not to miss a prayer at its time and to carry out my religious duties. Especially for religious people, who are punctual with prayer times... We meet some [people] inside the mosque, some are Sudanese, some famous people too, one is a football player, there are Yemini people and they are very good people, like brothers.

By Asim

Church is a big thing. It is a family basically. I go to the Eritrean church, it is my people, my language. You get to meet different people as well. There are people who go to church but not to bars/nightclubs and there are people who go to bars/nightclubs and not churches. So, this gives an opportunity to connect with different people

By Se'are

The Mosque [is important]... I work in the mosque for free. As a volunteer... I teach [women] to read the Quran, and a relationships developed [there, feel] comfortable

By Iman

The first place I like to go is the church. First, because I want to be blessed by going to church. Secondly, by going to church, I can meet new family [biete seb] and relate to my culture. I am happy about that

By Kidane

Church is the sacred place that gives me spiritual satisfaction and contentment. I am a Christian, and if I can go to church at least once a week, I know I'll have a blessed week. I do not go to church just as a habit. I understand the deep spiritual meaning of the church...I feel that I am in my country when I go to church. To see Eritrean traditional clothes, way of life, the jokes, the laughter, advice, the humility and respect that we're socialized to, and people praying together makes me feel I am in my country. Anyone who has a problem can come and ask for help. For example, if a person dies, people discuss about how to help and everyone makes financial contributions. The church gives peace

By Eyob

Church is also another important place. It is one of the places that gives you happiness. It is really important to take your family to church and get important life guidance that comes with this experience. The church also protects your children from indulging in unnecessary/unwanted activities in their life. It enables you to stay grounded and be content in life, which are important traits that you need in life. It is really important. For example, it is spiritually and socially fulfilling to go to church during Christmas (Geez Christmas), light candles and have the late night (after fasting breaks) food after church. Going to church also enables you to meet compatriots and deal with the brunt of longing, even though it is not same as going to a church in Eritrea. We do not have our parents here, you know. But as we [first generation refugees] are transitioning to parents, we need to work hard and transmit these important values to our children

By Biniam

I started going to church recently. It was not easy to go to church from Burley Park. It was far away. We also did not have enough information about where and how to go. I live within a walking distance from the church now, and I go there every Sunday. To me, the church is a place to communicate with God. I feel happy to go there and do my prayers. I can also meet other people. There are people who do not watch football, women, for example. By going to church, I can meet and socialize with many others I may not otherwise meet in coffee shops or pubs. You can meet many nice people. They invite you to their homes and you can have the Eritrean traditional coffee. You know our culture, it is really nice to feel at home.

By Ephrem

Cafes or Restaurants

I like coffee shops because of socialising, I like drinking coffee and sometime eating out and that makes me really happy...yeah that's really cultural, coffee and food... I like to enjoy life because I think I've been through such an ordeal, a traumatic experience so now I like to just have a nice time and laugh every day. That's it really.

By Anita

I like Costa café, I go just with my friends. When I find like six people, or seven people, they will say let's go drink something, coffee and talk together and chill, like I chill now.

By Faheem

There are couple of coffee shops [that are important] where I tend to go out and socialise with friends, not as much as I used to though

By Haris

I think the most important place where the Habesha community is found. I don't have a different life other than that...[it is a] restaurant.

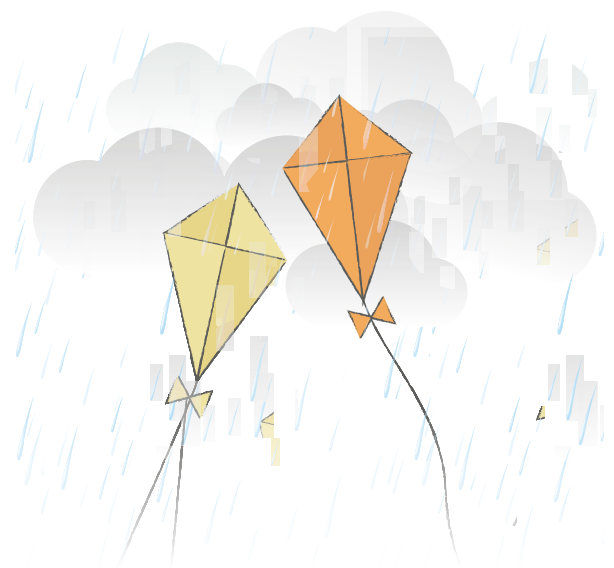
By Petros

We come to Costa after Friday Prayer, after mosque...costa is not boring... [we] gather every week to meet, have a chat, share news

By Asim and Suleyman

I like to go to pubs/bars and restaurants run by fellow refugees or other local residents. There are a few community bars that I go with my friends. These are places where I get to meet new friends and compatriots who share the same culture and speak my language. I also go to other pubs run by local residents

By Se'are



Cafés are important. I mean, you do not live an indoor life. In your free time, you do different activities. In my off time, I would like to meet my friends and fellow Eritreans in local cafes. I have made friends here as well who are not Eritreans. Meeting friends and compatriots in cafes helps refresh my mind and learn from people. You know, you get information from others. It is also a good opportunity to get a bit of a breather from the routine of a busy life

By Eyob

Cafes [are important because they] provide you the opportunity to give yourself a bit of time, meet with friends and socialize. You can exchange ideas and information with friends... The café in in Mercury Hotel is my favourite one.

By Biniam

I like to go to local places and watch football ... When I was an asylum seeker, I used to go to a community coffee shop, run by migrants in Lincoln Green. It was nice to go there with friends. You can watch football, play different games such as pool and meet new friends. There were many refugees and asylum seekers. Sometimes, I would also go to pubs. But the coffee shop was my favourite one...When I was seeking asylum, I was living in Burley Park, an isolated neighbourhood in Leeds. There were no refugee communities in the area. It was only British people. We were not able to meet people from our community. So, coming to these pubs and coffee shops was very important to me. I could meet people from my country, I could buy Eritrean food, and get information from other refugees and asylum seekers

By Ephrem

Café Nero in the city centre [of Sheffield] is a very important, I had a laptop and I would go to Café Nero to use wifi as we did not have internet connection in our asylum accommodation. I used to go to the Café regularly and do my own research about the UK system, and thanks to the internet connectivity, I learned a lot about the UK... There were many migrants from Africa who I met in the café. They taught me a lot about the UK. There was especially one person who came from Sierra Leone. We became close friends and we used to meet regularly. He was the first person to advise me to go to college and university. At first, I was not sharing my problems with anyone, you know, I was a bit of an introvert. I have changed now of course. So, yes the café helped me establish important social connections. And it became an important meeting place for many friends I met through social media... A 'personal mentor/advisor' is how I would describe the library. The library was my best friend. As a newcomer, things can be disorientating, and it was during those difficult times that the library offered me steady guidance. I borrowed a lot of books and DVDs from there. When I felt down, I would draw my inspiration by reading uplifting biographies of different people or by watching motivational videos. I was spending more than six hours in the library. Sometimes, I would only go to my asylum accommodation to eat. The library was my second home.

By Freselam

I like this place [Post Office] because it has nice coffee...It is a nice place. You can post your parcel and enjoy your coffee

By Hooman

Green Spaces

In my daily experience I like to go for a walk, I like to be near the nature. It's really calming because sometimes working life can be stressful, so on my lunch break I like to go out and have a little bit of a walk in that park near the solicitors from near the hospital that got benches, I like to go there and eat my lunch. So it's really important that I am surrounded by peace at some point during the day.

By Anita

I think most of the places that I go is where I can spend time with my children, generally parks. Most of the parks are nearby, like People's Park and Piece Hall, sometime we visit there so the children can play around there.

By Yann

I can say Golden Acre Park (is important) ... It is about walking, getting fresh air, communication with the environment, feeling you (be you). Leave the children around, give them their space without holding them, because there is a planner open and let children wear their wellies and splash with water. It is a safe and happy area. Roundhay Park, it is with big lake, for family adventure. I love the adventure. I like to walk in the wood of Roundhay Park, around the lake, go over the river and have that challenge-let the adrenaline come up and with a bit of sliding, slipping, fall, but it is nice time. Watching squirrels. It's kind of meditation, wellbeing, that be you...be you and no one will judge you, because when you're in this forest in these places, no one will judge you. Yeah, we have forest, we have the tropical world as well. It's nice to give value to the small insects, because in our country, we smash (making hand gesture) the insects while in tropical world, all insects, all animals are well respected. So it shows that animals have value in this country. In our country, no one has value-human and animal. So it is nice to give them that spirit, that feeling, just like that I am trying. And even next to the tropical world, there a garden, I can't remember what it's called. Always they had wedding pictures. There is a nice big garden and all the grasses are herbs. All the grasses are aromatherpic and when you walk there, you can (because I am from a country with plenty of aromatherapy. We eat aromatherapy herbs). So you can smell all these nice, and you feel yourself like you're flying while you're not flying but your mood.... by smelling because, image you're smelling like a nice smell, your spirit goes up

By Shanifa

[parks are important because of the] the kids, because they go school and they have another school in the evening, so all the week they are busy, and weekends we always go to parks. Sometimes Lister [Park], sometimes Bowling [Park], sometimes Walking Park, sometimes Parkside, we have stayed in all of the parks near our home, and we give them time to enjoy themselves outside and spend time with them.

By Hiba

Whitby, there is a sea side there and I told you there is a relationship between me and the sea... I love the sea so when I do meditation near the sea I feel a lot calmer, it gives me a lot of calm[ness] and relaxing [sensation]

By Ammar

Parks in general [are important]. Where I was living during my asylum process at Holbeck, there is a park nearby, so I was going there and it was mainly to do some reading, yeah just to read and I was also having some online English classes and it was the best place for me to go and speak aloud... I could not go where there were many people and start doing what I wanted, reading my books aloud and so on...I was just doing my best to go on my own and try to find my corner... because I like reading and it was a challenge for me to be able to read quickly in English, well to improve my reading skills and English.

By Jean

[When I am stressed] I go to the park and walk

By Oumar

I love the Castle...and the river. I used to go nearly every day in the summer...I like the water and the green...because it makes me remember my old days, back in Africa...yeah, I love green...[and] planting flowers and vegetables.

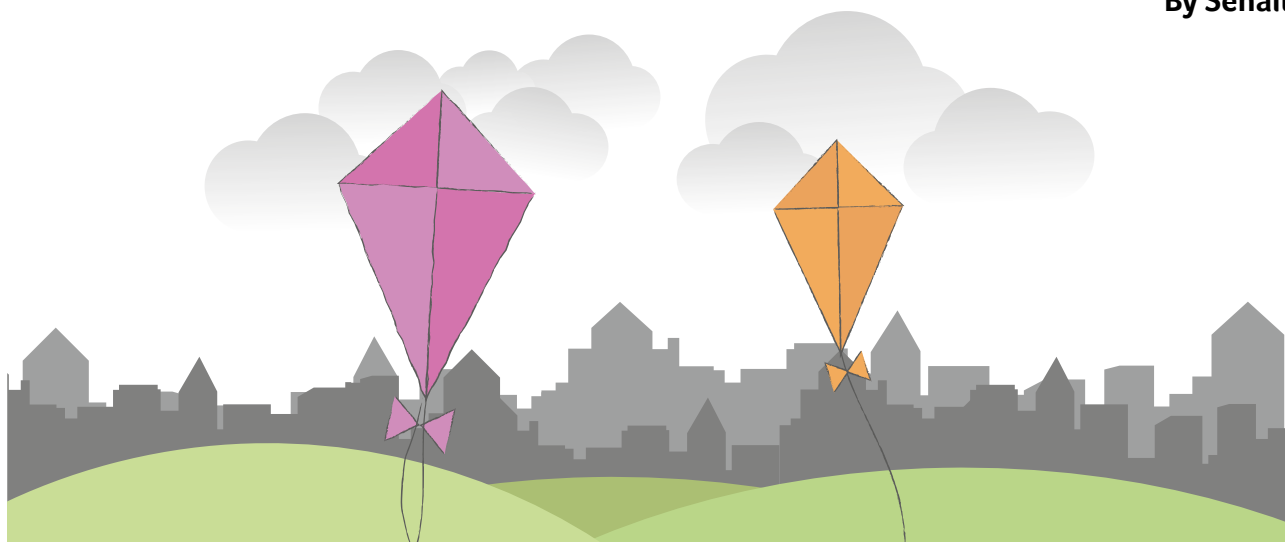
By Aamira

[I go to the] city park... just to spend good time, change of scenery, just leave home. I go to the city centre, make phone calls, watch people, then the day is over and I go back home...It adds nothing [to my life], but it takes me out of my daily routine. It is not a luxury. A bit of change

By Samir

The main place I went to when I first came to Leeds, and that gave me the opportunity to know and make friends with people, was Scarborough. In 2007, Sure Start Beeston organized a trip to Scarborough where many new asylum seekers came along. We were many of us. I will never forget this moment. I made friends with a lot of people; and to be in the seaside was a refreshing moment. It helps clear the mind of stress... I met a lot of people from different backgrounds [on that trip]: Asians and Africans and British. The organizers looked after us and our children very nicely. So, the whole journey has left in me a lasting impression. In view of the challenges we overcame when we first came, it was heartening to see how they welcomed us. It was unexpected experience. I am still in contact with friends whom I met on that occasion. Furthermore, the place was unique. It was a beautiful seaside. You can play with your children. It was a place of happiness. It refreshes your mind.

By Senait



I like parks because they demonstrate how the society respects people and the environment. You know, I draw my inspiration from the play corners at the parks, the flowers, and the professionalism of the staff who work there. The overall environment gives me happiness. You know, the scent that comes from the flowers also brings with it happiness and tranquillity. I really enjoy the pleasant smell of the flowers, especially in the months of June/July...The warm wind that blows gently brings with it memories of home. It brings also freshness. I like it. It inspires you of things you want to do and change back home. Of course, we know the limitation to doing that... There are two parks I like to visit. These're are Western Park and Botanical Garden ... Starting from the month of July, we go out to the park and make the traditional Eritrean coffee. We take the complete coffee set to the park, and you have all that comes with this ritual- jokes, boasting, arguments, storytelling, politics, persuasion, encouraging each other, gossip... etc. We invite each other, and while we enjoy our coffee, the children play football. We do that regularly during the summer season.

By Biniam

Libraries

Central library [in Halifax, is important] I bring the children there to get used to the books and sometimes we borrow some books for them to read and to help them improve in Maths or something like that

By Yann

[I volunteered in] Barlby library, a very decent job, and I made a lot of friends there ... [voluntary work helped me improve English and meet people]... when I first arrived here, I asked my case worker and the council and some volunteers here could you please find to me a volunteer work. They said your English is not good enough because I have never spoken English before the UK. But when I got the basic level of English then I could work as a volunteer.

By Ammar

I tend to spend quite a bit of time at the library at the moment which is quite important... library being a good place, they have a lot to offer and I am trying to rediscover reading again, and I am trying to find more time for reading...I tend to pop in a library 2 or 3 times maybe every fortnight.

By Haris

Library is important, because sometime I have stress, and if I do, I need to go to the library to read books, or I call somebody and we sit there.

By Oumar

[library is important because] you can focus to read, or to make my weekly plan. As I told you shopping is difficult, so at home I can't focus with the baby, so if there is library nearby it will make you to focus, and if there are books. I love to read. You can take easily your book and you can read it at home

By Mazaa

Library was the most important thing, because it was a place where I could take my children for a lot of activities. The library was especially important for developing their reading skills and/or to use computers. It was also by going to the library that we came to know about BBC Bitesize online study support for my children

By Abia

Sheffield public library was also very important to me. I had my membership card, and I used to go there regularly. After I received my refugee status, I also used to go there to do job search activities.

By Freselam

Educational Institutions

A place that is important to me in Leeds, my first best thing is to go to College to improve my English, after that I need to get experience about my previous job... Yeah if you need to improve on some things, you need to go to college, is a place where you can learn something. You can't go with a friend to improve your English... I want to improve in my skills because in my country I was an electrician ... I hope to be an electrician [also here]

By Adamo

If you want to learn, you have to go to college or school.

By Hiba

College is important place to me because it is a place that I go on a daily basis and learn. It is also a social space where I meet new people, learn other languages and cultures and make friendship with people from different backgrounds and places. It is a place for an informal learning as well

By Se'are

College here, because it helped me a lot to improve my English and to achieve what I want to do in the future.

By Murab

College is a very important place because I have to learn [English] in order to integrate better... College is so important because it will help me build my life back...because if I don't go to college, I will not be able to communicate, I won't know how to be part of the community, get a job so that's it. Also it will help me support my children because if I can't communicate or speak, I will have so many difficulties supporting my children.

By Serene

School is very important for the kids because they spend most of their time at school, more than 7 hours and it is important also because they can develop relationships and can create friends. It is also important to develop their language and how to communicate with others. So, it is clearly very important

By Zamir

I like to go school because I do school run... I think for me that's how I met some parents and friend still. You know helps me to integrate. Because we see each other every day

By Mazaa

College had become important, where I go meet friends, I hang out with them and learn English, though I learn very slowly. Maybe because of my age

By Iman

College is important to me, because I can meet many people, improve my language, and I can learn about a lot of things in college. And I feel happy about this

By Kidane

Schools are very important to me, because when I first came to the UK, my main concern was how to register my children in school. My children waited for six months without school and it was not easy...I have three children whose language is not English. You know, we came from another country with a different language. In the UK, children are placed in class sets according to their age. So, when we found a school, my son was put in year six while he should have been placed in year five. He was year four when we came, and they skipped one year (year five) to place him in year six simply because of his age...[also college for me] When I was an asylum seeker, I called the college to book appointment and went there to register. I told them that I had a child under five and I would need childcare support. They said they couldn't provide childcare. It was already in September and I could not register my daughter in Nursery either. So, I had to wait for one year before starting college.

By Abia

I love the university [of Huddersfield] because I graduated from there. I did my PhD there... Coming [first] as a student, I had quite easy life here. However, even though I say I had an easy life, it was not that easy. It was so difficult. I remember I was homesick during the first two-three months of starting my PhD here. But remembering that I had support from my colleagues at the university, from my supervisors, from my family in Iran and all those staff helped me a lot. My supervisors told me that I was not alone here. They told me about some specific support opportunities at the University of Huddersfield. There is a place where you can go without an appointment and there is somebody who listens to you enthusiastically. They are trained Psychologists. I had a chance to go there and those sessions helped me a lot. It was nice.

By Hooman

Then the Hepworth Gallery which is not too far from the church as well, along the same road, Barnsley Road, I think it's about five, six years now that they had it there. It's been really helpful because my son love art so his name was even recorded in one of the newspapers for participating because during the summer holiday we use that place for his art work for a week. So he loves going there and he is really good in doing it and it was part of the summer as well so he enjoyed it. So he is handy that something that my son love doing and there is a place for him to go and do that

By Priti

[Museums are important] going to the museum, I can learn a lot about the history of British society. The museum tells you the developmental stages/trajectory of the society. I can learn about where they were and where they're now. Furthermore, the museum tells you about the care British people give to animals. It is really pleasing to see what they have been through and what they have achieved now. The artefacts tell you a lot in this regards

By Biniam

Food shops/markets

...there are some Arabic food that we need to get from Leeds because there is more ethnicities there. So there will probably be more food, there is no Arabic food here so we have to get there... The fresh African food is really hard to find....I buy different things from Leeds, yes...We try new things... Sudanese [food] like peanut butter and falafel. You can buy some here but the special ones are there [in Leeds]. And Lebanese food like cheese, lavender and Lebanese hummus

By Aamira and Amina

[Leeds is important because] when I came first here it was very difficult to find a kind of food we like and we used to take the train to Leeds to bring that food. This is the case for migrants in general, and in particular for refugees, when they came first in UK. I suggest that they should be located in cities rather than villages, because of that, at least initially, and at the beginning

By Zamir

I am living around Cottingley, in Cottingley there is no shop. I need to go to Beeston. I need to take two Buses to go to Beeston. Before there was Aldi nearby five minutes' walk but I don't know there reason they closed it. There is farm food. That is not healthy. I can't go and buy it. May be milk and bread but not like vegetable...For every migrant shopping is an issue especially grocery is an issue. So we should go to Beeston or I should come at the City here to Morrison, Sainsbury or Aldi. That is the option I have...[there is a] market but you can't come daily in the market....Grocery is a big issue... we always complain about shopping. Because as I told you in Farm House is a frozen food. We can't buy anything...Before Cottingley I used to live in Harehills. I don't like the environment in Harehills, but I love the shopping there. You can get fresh everything very easily

By Miriam

I go to [Leeds] market, I get things ... And Arabic shops. Arabic Halal food shops... I like to enjoy looking around in the market. There are new things, the fruit and vegetables also look good, I always buy some

By Amira

Town/City/Area as a whole

Little London is a place I visit often because most of my friends live there. It is an important place for me to go because most of my friends live down there and it is friendlier to be together and spend good time with each other and the happy time we have there, that's why I like it.

By Maya

I like to visit Moor town because I used to live there and it was a good area, very peaceful area and I love it...I used to live there and I am more familiar with this area. And also I've got friends there as well, from the school where I used to drop my children. I had friends from the school, parents.

By Maya

The city centre of Leeds is important for me, because when I was in the asylum process I couldn't work, and I hate to stay at home, so it's the best way, I was coming to spend my time in the library, sometimes I was just walking and wondering about...here, my general observation is that people are so closed towards strangers. They are so closed to engage in conversations and so on, which is completely different in my country, where everyone you meet on the road is a friend who is a brother or a sister, who you can talk to and you can ask any questions about the city, or about anything, which is quite different from here. So [here] to come to the city centre for a walk and so on, is really about myself. If it was [happening] in Africa I would say that I would do it to have the opportunity to interact with new people. But unfortunately here it was just to take some fresh air, to see buildings and to discover new places and so on.

By Jean

...this is my favourite place, I want to stay here, grow up here and I don't want to change... because I have a lot of friends you see, then neighbours are very friendly people, and this is my life in [this town], I am very happy [here] and I never want to change. Then my daughter, she has a lot of friends here, yes.

By Aamira

Sheffield takes a special place in my heart. Sheffield was the first place in the UK that I lived, and the city where I learned everything about the UK. In Sheffield, I made friends, established important personal and professional connections, started my first job in the UK, and most importantly, I received my paper [refugee status]. In the charity sector, there was especially a woman called, Louise [not her real name] who offered me invaluable support. She was the person who taught me everything about the UK. She knew about my professional background and guided me in the right direction. I have been to different cities in the UK, but I consider Sheffield occupies special place in my journey in the UK. It is the first place I lived in the UK.

By Freselam

Everything is new when you leave your country and move to another. I had to make efforts to understand things, including places and the people. Wakefield is the first city I lived when I came to the UK. I was new to the country, with no papers, no family, and no knowledge of what

the future holds for me and with a sense of isolation. I waited for seven months on my asylum application, and during that difficult period, there were important places that I visited regularly. There are places that are remembered for bad or good. Wakefield was important city in that respect. The parks, the city centre and church were very important to me. I would go to a quiet space in a park and reflect and meditate on my situation. I also used to go the coffee shops in the city centre to meet people and/or get some space to reflect.

By Gebre

In general, I love Leeds. It is the first place I settled in when I got my refugee status. I have lived here for many years, and there are many places, such as this one (the Tiled Café in Leeds Public Library) I like to visit... I did my studies in the region and I was well connected here in Leeds...as a refugee, the first city you settle is your home town. You accept it as your home town. Leeds was the first city I moved to when I received my refugee status. It was the place where I made friends and reunited with my wife and my children. Moreover, Leeds is the first city where my children started their education. I had developed all my support networks here, and I did not want to lose this by moving

By Gebre



Sport Clubs/Gym

Where I play football [is important]. It's a place where I can show what I am capable of on the football ground in football. Football in my life helped me a lot. I didn't gain millions but it helped me to have very good friends, relationship you know, when you play for a football team, you see different people, different type of people. Also if you are a good player, people will respect you and talk to you, so it makes it easier for you to have good contact to ask things that you want to have.

By Murab

When I am stressed, I go to the gym and I forget things, because there are too many things in my head

By Oumar

Work/Volunteering place

[the work place is important, Human Kind] is a hostel for homeless people so I am there as a support worker so I think it's sort of like, I do identify quite a lot with people who have been feeling left out, you know, being down and everything not going the way they would want. So it actually does feel very good to be working or to be doing something that helps someone who would otherwise be sleeping outside. And some people might have other issues like substances misuse and alcohol, and being able sometimes to make a difference in somebody's life, I think that's a good thing... and with the Refugee Forum, the project that we have been doing of which we have volunteer who are helping welcome people who are new to Bradford. So somebody comes here and they don't know where to go, they don't speak the language, even those who do speak the language, it's always not very easy when you are in a new place. Then we are able to find volunteers who can maybe befriend people and let's say for example you want to go to the hospital and somebody tells you, you need to go to BRI, you don't know what to do, you don't know to catch a bus, where do I come out at...so somebody might be able to either explain it in your own language or just tell you or maybe to come with you and may be able to help you through that and it may be something small but it can make a big difference in somebody's life.

By Declan

Basically my important place was workplace. Because it is too close I had children to take to school and so it was really work position. So Chapeltown, school, work. It was really very important to me because I just to be around my activities. It is easy to get in to town. To go to college so it was easy for me...[this was] at RETAS. I was working as an employment and education advisor.

By Kayo

[Schools where she works and volunteers is important] It reminds me of my work, it reminds that I need to work. It is a good place where one can keep in contact with the community, and it is an opportunity to make connections with people and nice friendships... I work in two primary schools, one English school as lunchtime assistant; and another one is Arabic, just one day in the weekend

By Yara

I worked as a volunteer with one of the charities for a month...it was a charity shop, selling used items. I like it because I have the opportunity to practice English and connect with people. Though it was not a paid job, but I like it for these reasons. I felt that my English has improved a lot during that one month I spent with the charity...and then everything stopped after I became pregnant

By Jamila

My workplace [is important]. I work as a warehouse operative with a company and I regularly go to my workplace. I go to work in order to have normal life. I have to work, if I do not work, I cannot do anything. I can only improve by working... [also] I need money, you know. I want to support my family [abroad]

By Kidane

Many places that are important to me. My workplace is one... First of all, you need to work. That is a fact of life. You need money to live and you need to work for that. Secondly, work helps bring contentment in and about life. As long as we're in this country, the government has provided us with sanctuary; and I have to work if I am capable. Workplace also helps you make and learn from friends. My workplace in this regards has set me off to a good start

By Eyob

Home

I would say [that] home sweet home [is important]... most of the time you have peace in your home and you can take rest, you can spend time with your family and I am not working now so if I finish anything outside, I will go home.

By Hiba

My home is important obviously ... because, particularly when I am not working on Sundays, it gives me a lot of peace and relaxation, to be honest. It's a very homely feeling, you get what I am saying?

By Haris

Where I live [is important] because to study or to do things you need to have places where to stay and think about things. If you don't have where to stay how are you going to think about other things in the future

By Murab

[My home is important because] well of course that is my home, so it is not like I am going to go out here and have like, stay out in a cold. Much of the time you spend is either at work or at home. Having somewhere you can go and you can call home is a good thing. In a way it's a second home because as a refugee I still feel like my wider community is not actually here. And having my own family and being able to stay or have somewhere to stay, a roof over your head I think I appreciate more having worked with people who are struggling and sometimes have no roof over their head. And so yeah, I do appreciate more of it and you cannot actually just take it for granted that you have somewhere that you can go

By Declan

The first place [that is important] is my home ... Because it is the place that brings me and my family together and my family is the most important thing in my life. My husband is very supportive to me and we have good memories together. We both love to have kids, but after my first baby it took me 7 years to get pregnant again. During this time my husband stand by my side and kept to be very supportive. So, when I get pregnant again all of us feel so happy. Before getting pregnant my only child used to ask me why I did not have siblings. So, when I told him I am pregnant he was so happy and kept to ask me when you are going to give birth to a baby

By Jamila



Migration Yorkshire
Enterprise House
12 St Paul's Street
Leeds
LS1 2LE

0113 37 88188

[@migrationyorks](#)

www.migrantinfohub.org.uk Covid-19 information for migrants and services in Yorkshire and Humber. Resources to share.

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