

# Response ID ANON-T6YS-REQH-6

Submitted to Refugee Integration Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022-2027 Consultation  
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## Introduction

### Contact name

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### Name and address of organisation(if applicable)

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## Vision

1 Do you agree that this should be the overall Vision for the Strategy?

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or suggest what you would prefer to have as the overall vision in the box below :

Should go further to include 'others in need of international protection' along with refugees and asylum seekers.

## High Level Outcomes

Outcome 1 is Refugees and asylum seekers are valued and respected: Refugees and asylum seekers are respected as members of our communities and their knowledge and contribution to society is recognised and valued

2 Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below :

Outcome 2 is Refugees and asylum seekers are safe and feel secure: Refugees and asylum seekers feel welcome and live here safely without fear of persecution or discrimination resulting from their immigration status.

3 Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

Outcome 3 is Refugees and asylum seekers exercise their rights and responsibilities: Refugees and asylum seekers are integrated into diverse and inclusive communities and are aware of and able to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

4 Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

Outcome 4 is Refugees and asylum seekers are supported to achieve their full potential: Refugees and asylum seekers have access to services and support to achieve their full potential.

5 Do you agree that this should be a key outcome for the Strategy? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below :

6 Is there anything else which should be considered as a key outcome?

Yes

If you answered Yes, Please provide details in the box below:

There should be a key outcome related to the mitigating against the hostile environment in particular mitigations for those vulnerable to destitution as a result of the No Recourse to Public Funds condition and those excluded from accessing public housing, benefits, and who are subject to NHS charges.

### Priorities and Actions

7 Do you agree that Engagement and Inclusion should be a priority to achieve outcome 1? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

8 Do you agree that the action identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 1?

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below :

9 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?

Yes

If you answered Yes, Please provide details in the box below:

Involving people with lived experience creates real opportunities to achieve the vision of the strategy. It is however, important that engagement is genuine and those with lived experience are adequately supported to engage - they have the same level of input as others and access to necessary resources to do so e.g digital skills, access and technology and qualified interpreters. It is important to determine the readiness and emotional support needs of those with lived experience to share their personal experiences.

Engagement and inclusion must be more than tokenism and be actual active engagement in the direction and scope of the Strategy and its impact.

It is important to review the co-production model on an ongoing basis to ensure effective identification and addressing of needs and that there is in fact actual active engagement. It would be useful to include measurements in relation to this.

### Priorities and Actions

10 Do you agree that Education and Training should be a priority to achieve outcome 1? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

11 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 1 ? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

12 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?

Yes

Please detail in the box below:

Almost 12% of the population in NI are non-internet users.

It is crucial that when considering access to education and ESOL classes that digital barriers are addressed. It is important to support ESOL classes at all

levels and across NI.

## Priorities and Actions

13 Do you agree that Community Support should be a priority to achieve outcome 1? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

14 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 1? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

15 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?

Yes

Please detail in the box below:

Our experience, relationship and asks from VPRS providers tells us the support is neither broad enough nor for long enough. There is a focus on not creating independence which has resulted in many being left hanging, unsupported with no knowledge of where or how to access support, no relationship built with other trusted organisations, no language support and unclear of their rights and entitlements all of which has a detrimental effect on the individual and their families and ultimately on their ability to integrate.

Consideration should also be given to community organising, building the capacity of refugee led community organisations and the use of civic activism tools to facilitate engagement directly with refugees in policy making .

TBUC should be reviewed to support regional NI wide good relations projects that address the issues and challenges of ethnic minorities. There should also more promotion of projects that go beyond the traditional green and orange relations.

16 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 1: Refugees and asylum seekers are valued and respected?

No

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

## Priorities and Actions

17 Do you agree that Housing should be a priority to achieve outcome 2? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

18 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 2? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

19 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?Please detail in the box below

Not Answered

Please detail in the box below:

The following housing issues should be considered:

- WiFi in all accommodation provided to asylum seekers
- Provision of housing for asylum seekers / refugees should also take into account cultural needs such as proximity to halal providers, places of worship e.g. mosques, etc.
- Provide funding to appropriate ngos to provide information and support on rights and entitlements re benefits, housing, education and health and also provide interpreters
- Access to timely, quality housing advice, advocacy and support services in areas deemed to be safe

## Priorities and Actions

20 Do you agree that tackling Destitution should be a priority to achieve outcome 2? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

21 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 2? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

22 Are there any other actions which should be considered to deliver the priority?

Yes

Please detail in the box below:

Ensuring access to specialist advice to help prevent destitution

Develop and support measures to mitigate against destitution

Engage with the advice sector and other community and voluntary organisations to contribute to data gathering and long term resolutions to destitution

## Priorities and Actions

23 Do you agree that Protecting the Most Vulnerable should be a priority to achieve outcome 2? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

24 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 2? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

25 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority?

Not Answered

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

We support our member, the Migrant Centres response to this question:

"Vulnerability assessments should be introduced in a trauma-informed manner and should be supplemented by ring-fenced funding for specialist support services.

Specialist victim support services should be introduced specifically designed to serve refugee and asylum seeker, migrant, and ethnic minority victims of domestic and sexual violence. These specialist services should provide holistic support to victims including assistance accessing housing, benefits, healthcare, immigration advice, etc. and not exclusively exist to support interfacing with the criminal justice system. This is important because many victims of domestic/sexual abuse will not ever go through the criminal justice system even if the option is available, and because victims regardless of whether they report to the police require basic needs of safe accommodation, financial independence, healthcare, and secure immigration status met in order to sustainably exit abusive relationships. Specialist services for refugee and asylum seeker, migrant, and ethnic minority victims of abuse currently exist in England, Scotland, and Wales, but not Northern Ireland - this is an area where NI needs to catch up.

Resourcing and training should be implemented to support increased multi-lingual counselling services, as need currently far exceeds supply. This is especially important because some people are not comfortable having an interpreter in the room for a counselling session due to the intensely private nature, or there may be logistical issues associated with interpreters for counselling (especially over-the-phone counselling).

Ease of accessibility to interpreting services within the Health Trusts should be improved.

Steps must also be taken to improve ease of access to GP registration. Our services users regularly report difficulty registering with GPs, and are frequently turned away on the grounds of not providing adequate documentation or being able to provide "acceptable" proof of residence despite the fact that this is not a legal requirement for registration, or due to communication issues. MCNI's 2017 report on ethnic minority women's experiences of healthcare found that 20% of refugee and asylum seeker women found registering with a GP "difficult" or "very difficult", and 26.7% reported that getting an appointment with their GP is "fairly difficult" or "very difficult".

The need for training medical professionals on culturally competent practice is also necessary. In addition, grassroots public health outreach and awareness campaigns targeted at refugee and asylum seeker women should be supported through ring-fenced funding.

Transparency from the NIHSC Trusts on immigration reporting is necessary, given that the British Medical Association states that immigration reporting has a deterrent effect on migrants accessing healthcare, including asylum seekers. A coordinated engagement and outreach plan should be implemented to counter-act the potential deterrent effect of immigration reporting on those who would otherwise seek preventative medical screenings, report abuse, or access care.

Within the NI Housing Executive, there should be a review of the HIPA scheme and training on the proper administration of this scheme, as MCNI race hate crime victim advocates have repeatedly run into issues with NIHE staff being unaware of the scheme and barriers helping victims to avail of the scheme as a result.

Digital inclusion - access, skills, data and devices are also central to the protection of the most vulnerable in relation to services in general.

26 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 2: Refugees and asylum seekers are safe and feel secure?

Not Answered

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

There is a need for clear guidance and collaboration between HO, statutory agencies and health sector in relation to healthcare charges and immigration status.

### Priorities and Actions

27 Do you agree that Pathway to Citizenship should be a priority to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

28 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

29 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Not Answered

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

Support people to understand their rights and responsibilities regarding citizenship and design tailored training to assist the most vulnerable (for example unaccompanied minors and women who have experienced domestic abuse) with citizenship processes

There is very limited specialist legal immigration advice in NI. Advice NI is OISC level 3 registered and funded by the Home Office to provide EUSS immigration advice. There is a real need to resource specialist immigration advice beyond EUSS. Because this is not a devolved matter and because it falls between the stools of different government departments it does not receive the priority required. Based on a yet to be published report by Refugee Action we know that are only 9 private firms acknowledged registration with the Law Society to deliver immigration advice and 10 or less barristers responded to working in this area.

It is crucial that those in immigration detention – Larne House & prisons and have access to free, timely, accurate level 3 immigration advice and that it is available and accessible to anyone who needs it.

### Priorities and Actions

30 Do you agree that Partnership with Communities should be a priority to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

31 Do you agree that the action identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

32 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Yes

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

• Provide funding to appropriate ngos to set up buddy schemes for new arrivals where local people can support newcomers to learn about their new environment, what's on e.g. Friendship club, libraries, and other free events and offer friendship.

### Priorities and Actions

33 Do you agree that Access to Services should be a priority to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

34 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 3? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

35 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Yes

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box:

It is essential that advice and information service providers are engaged in developing resources and accessible information for refugees on their rights and entitlements.

Support should be provided to support digital inclusion and entitlement programmes such as those delivered by Advice NI. We are currently training up volunteer Digital Money Champions who have a language in addition to English. Our Digital Champions are delivering digital skills courses and we are engaging with programmes that enable us to distribute devices and data.

36 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 3: Refugees and asylum seekers exercise their rights and responsibilities?

Not Answered

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

### Priorities and Actions

37 Do you agree that ESOL should be a priority to achieve outcome 4? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

38 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 4? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

39 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Not Answered

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

Important that community based ESOL training with trusted partners is supported across NI and that the issue of digital inclusion is addressed to ensure access.

### Priorities and Actions

40 Do you agree that Employability and Welfare should be a priority to achieve outcome 4? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

41 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 4? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

42 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Yes

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box:

Advice traineeships should be offered to refugees in the advice sector.

Refugees bring a wealth of skills and experience to NI and yet face significant barriers to accessing the labour market, face discrimination and lack of equal opportunities in labour markets and in work, and often engage in employment below their skills and qualification levels and with little chance of progression to their desired roles.

Others that aim to get into business through self-employment might not have access to the necessary advice or funding opportunities to progress their ideas further.

In both situation, those vulnerable categories such as women or young people struggle most as a result of unfavourable work/life balance policies or lack of access to training and support.

Often, employers are not aware of different immigration status rights and entitlements or skills and experiences that individuals bring. In other situations, employers are aware of skills, knowledge and experience of potential staff but unsure of rights and entitlements.

Similarly, many refugees and asylum seekers face barriers for accessing volunteering, work placement opportunities or even accessing education, training.

Since UK exit from EU and Covid 19 more employers in NI have shown an interest in recruiting refugees and asylum seekers, but additional support is needed to make such initiatives happen

## Priorities and Actions

43 Do you agree that Effective Partnership Working should be a priority to achieve outcome 4? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

44 Do you agree that the actions identified will be the best approach to achieve outcome 4? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

45 Are there any other actions that should be considered to deliver the priority? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Not Answered

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box:

Resourcing specialist service delivery and funding capacity building programming for refugee and asylum seeker-led organisations will be crucial to effective partnership working.

It is important the advice sector is included.

46 Are there other higher priority areas and associated actions that should be considered to achieve outcome 4: Refugees and asylum seekers are supported to achieve their full potential? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

No

If you have selected 'yes', please detail in the box below:

## Monitoring and Evaluation

47 Do you agree with the approach to monitoring progress through the Strategic Planning Group? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Neither Agree nor Disagree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

Neither agree nor disagree - further information is needed about the structure, co-design process, aims, and membership of the Strategic Planning Group.

50% of non-government representatives on the group should be made up of those with lived experience.

48 Do you agree with the approach to consider research taking into account the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers here to provide a wider and more informed picture on the effectiveness of the strategy? Please tick the box which best reflects your response

Strongly Agree

If you have selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree', please outline your reasons or additional commentary in the box below:

## OTHER COMMENTS

49 Please provide any other comments to inform the final strategy.

Please input below:

The following cross-cutting strategic integration issues

- language and communication,
- advice information and data
- service planning and provision

should be considered by everyone who works with and/or supports refugees and asylum seekers as well as the need to take a more holistic perspective on refugee integration.

Advice NI is keen to share our experience of the needs presented by refugees to our services and the asks of other organisations that support them.

We strongly recognise the need for free specialist immigration advice in NI.