

## The Gateway Protection Programme: an evaluation

### An overview of Immigration Research and Statistics (IRS) research exploring the integration of refugees resettled under the UK's Gateway Protection Programme in Sheffield, Bolton, Hull and Rochdale.

*Olga Evans and Rosemary Murray*

#### Key implications for decision makers

The Gateway Protection Programme was found to be effective in meeting the refugees' basic material and orientation needs. Refugees' reports suggested that the lead agency caseworkers were fundamental to this process. Up to 18 months after resettlement, refugees remain grateful to have been resettled and plan to stay in the UK.

Up to 18 months after resettlement, lack of employment and limited English language skills remained fundamental barriers to progress towards integration, and an important source of anxiety and frustration for the refugees. Married women with children were making least progress.

The research suggested eight strategies that might further improve integration of Gateway refugees.

- Facilitating more English language training, other education, and training towards employment in the early days may optimise long-term integration.
- Unless English language training can be made dramatically more effective, interpretation needs to be available beyond 12 months.

- Refugees commented that they need to be more fully informed of their employment and training prospects before coming to the UK.
- Additional strategies are needed to improve employment prospects. Targeted media campaigns could clarify the employment status of refugees for employers. Partners in Gateway delivery could broker employment or work-relevant volunteering opportunities, perhaps introducing and vouching for refugees.
- Integration strategies for specific sub-groups (e.g. mothers, lone adults, and children) could be developed (e.g. 'buddying'/mentoring through schools, playgroups, or places of worship).
- Social and cultural orientation training needs to be ongoing through the 12-month support period.
- The process for Family Reunion, and the fact that it is not likely to be rapid, need to be emphasised to refugees before they come to the UK.
- More liaison with the police could encourage refugees to report harassment and increase their feelings of safety.

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#### Keywords

Integration  
Refugee  
Resettlement  
Gateway Protection Programme

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#### Background and aims

This report gives an overview of findings and messages from research with four groups of Gateway Protection Programme (Gateway) refugees. Gateway brings up to 500<sup>1</sup> particularly vulnerable refugees to the UK each year and provides them with 12 months of dedicated support towards integration.

The aim of the research was to monitor and evaluate the resettlement and progress towards integration of refugees arriving in the UK under Gateway.

#### Method

Immigration Research and Statistics (IRS) studied the first two groups to arrive under Gateway in 2004, and two groups who arrived in 2006 when the programme had become established. Almost all the adults in the four Gateway groups (53 men and 76 women) participated in the research. Half were from Liberia and half from the Democratic Republic of Congo. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data were collected longitudinally up to 18 months after resettlement with the first two groups, and once, at ten months after resettlement, with the later two groups.

#### Summary of research findings

- **Resettlement** was a welcome prospect for all the refugees.
- **Information provided to refugees** improved as the programme became established.

<sup>1</sup> Since 2008/09 the quota has increased to 750 refugees per financial year.

- **Orientation training** pre- and post-arrival was generally seen as effective but more could be done to manage unrealistic expectations, particularly around employment prospects and the process for bringing family members to the UK.
- **Housing** was broadly satisfactory. Neighbourliness was a key factor in satisfaction.
- **State benefits** were enduringly the only source of income for most refugees. High heating bills and saving for visas and other documents (to enable them to travel outside the UK, for family members to join them or for ID purposes) and remittances to Africa affected some people.
- Access to **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)** tuition varied within and between groups. English language skills improved over time but remained a critical barrier to integration up to 18 months, particularly for married women with children and the Congolese refugees more generally.
- **Other adult education**, ranging from basic skills to university degrees, was taken up by around two-fifths of refugees, and most aspired to further study. Lack of funding, poor English skills, time, and information about courses constrained progress. Women with children were least likely to have participated.
- Finding **paid work** was a primary concern and problem for all groups. Employment aspirations reflected pre-UK qualifications and experience but most refugees were applying for any work they could find. By 18 months, between one-eighth and two-fifths of each group had worked at some point since resettlement but few had found sustained employment. Almost all employment found by refugees was in temporary, low-skill, low-paid jobs, and was mostly found through agencies. Employment rates were highest in Rochdale, apparently due to

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lead agency intervention. Many women wanted to work but were far less likely than men to have done so. Across the groups, English language skills and lack of recognised qualifications and experience were the commonest barriers.

- By 18 months, **volunteering** experience had been gained by between one-fifth and one-third of each group. Most had been with refugee community organisations. Men in Rochdale had been most successful in obtaining voluntary work experience. Women with children were least likely to have volunteered.
- All were registered with GPs, and most who experienced **health** problems had sought help. Most were satisfied with their care but language was a barrier for some, especially in Hull and Rochdale where the groups were exclusively Congolese. Interpretation was not always readily available.
- **Social connections**
  - Between one-quarter and two-fifths of households had made **Family Reunion** applications to bring family members to the UK.
  - **Friendships** with other Gateway refugees were generally central to social networks.
  - **Places of worship** were the most frequently mentioned social link with the wider community.
  - **Lead agency caseworkers** were a pivotal source of support.
- **Safety and stability** were central to refugees' satisfaction with their UK lives. Unfortunately, between one-quarter and half of each group experienced either verbal or physical harassment.

Incidence, and also reporting to police, was highest in Bolton. Some in Sheffield and Bolton moved house to escape harassment.

- Those asked whether they hoped to take up **citizenship** (only those in Bolton were asked) said they hoped to, but many were unclear about what this entailed or the rights and responsibilities that went with it.
- Lack of wide recognition of refugees' **identity documents** was a persistent problem; increasingly this was being overcome by obtaining provisional driving licences.
- **Children** were perceived to be integrating well. Difficulties with schooling sometimes arose and, although these were generally tackled effectively, there was concern about children's ability to catch up with peers.

## Conclusions

Gateway lead agencies fulfilled their grant agreements. Refugees were glad to be in the UK and planned to stay. Progress was being made against indicators of integration, but married women with children were making least progress. Key issues for all groups were access to ESOL and employment and these areas will need further facilitation.

Follow-up, perhaps at around five years (when citizenship applications can be made), would provide a picture of longer-term integration prospects, barriers and facilitators for Gateway groups.

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## I Introduction

### Aim of this report

This report draws together the learning from research with four groups of refugees resettled under the Gateway Protection Programme (Gateway). It presents a picture of progress towards integration, from arrival in the UK to 18 months after resettlement. The research was conducted to inform optimal development and delivery of Gateway. The underlying data are a mix of cross-sectional and longitudinal, qualitative and quantitative information, gathered from the refugees themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the report, various challenges are identified, which some or all of the Gateway refugees faced. No comparison has been made with other refugee groups, foreign nationals or the UK population in general. Therefore, no inferences should be made about the relative magnitude or nature of these barriers: the information is provided specifically to inform future operation of Gateway or similar schemes.

### **The Gateway Protection Programme (Gateway)**

Gateway is the UK government 'quota refugee' resettlement scheme, instituted under the 2002 Immigration and Asylum Act. It is targeted at refugees designated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as especially vulnerable, and individually assessed as eligible by the Home Office. Since 2004, up to 500 refugees per year, arriving in groups of around 60 people, have been brought to the UK under this scheme. It is funded by the Home Office and managed in partnership with local authorities and voluntary sector partners. Once in the UK, refugees are granted permanent residency and enter a specialised 12-month programme of support for integration into their new lives. For each group this support is organised by a designated lead agency. Appendix 1 gives further details of the operation of the programme, and of the role of the lead agency.

### Definition of integration

There are numerous definitions of integration. The model of integration underpinning this research is that set out in the Home Office strategy document, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration (2005)*. The working definition of integration is as follows. "Integration takes place when refugees are empowered to:

- achieve their full potential as members of British society;

<sup>2</sup> In Hull and Rochdale only, interviews were also conducted with service providers. Where information from these is included in this report, this 'non-refugee' source is noted.

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- contribute to the community; and
- access the services to which they are entitled.”

A number of high level indicators for measuring the success of integration interventions were suggested in the strategy document (op cit). These are:

- employment rates;
  - levels of English attainment;
  - numbers involved in volunteering;
  - numbers in touch with community organisations (local groups and wider community);
  - proportions reporting racial, cultural, or religious harassment;
  - proportion taking up citizenship once qualified to do so;
  - rates of access to housing services; and
  - rates of satisfaction with children’s education.
- 

## 2 Method

Research methods and participant characteristics varied in important ways between Gateway groups. Table I provides a summary of the participants, timing and methods of data collection in all four areas. A detailed account of the method, including ethical issues, is provided in Appendix 2.

Reference is sometimes made to one or more, but not all, groups because data were not collected on some topics from all groups. The point illustrated may or may not apply equally to the groups not reported on. Where differences between groups were observed, this is stated.

### Participants

The participants were all either Liberian or from the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congolese). They included the first two groups to arrive under Gateway, and two groups who arrived once Gateway had become better established. The first two groups were resettled in Sheffield and Bolton in 2004. The other two groups were resettled in Hull and in Rochdale in 2006. The rationale for selection of groups is given in Appendix 2.

In each of the four resettlement areas, all adult and older minor refugees<sup>3</sup> were invited to participate in the research, and almost everyone invited took part. Therefore, the research represents a near census of the four groups. Table A1, in Appendix 2, summarises the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

### Mode of data collection

Data were collected through individual interviews in Sheffield and Bolton, and using questionnaires administered in a group meeting in Hull and Rochdale. The approach varied between purely qualitative with the Sheffield group to primarily quantitative with the Hull and Rochdale groups. The Sheffield and Bolton groups were involved longitudinally, up to 18 months after resettlement; the Hull and Rochdale groups participated once, at around 10 months after resettlement.

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<sup>3</sup> The age range varied across the groups. In Sheffield all refugees aged 16 years and over on arrival in the UK were invited to participate in the research. In Bolton the same approach was used initially, until a review of procedures led to the decision to restrict participation to those aged 17 years and over. In Hull and Rochdale only those aged 17 or older were invited to participate. In the interests of simplicity, the participants are generally referred to as adults.

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**Table 1** Summary of research participants and methods

| Gateway group  | Interview wave (months after resettlement) | Method  | Date                    |
|--|--|---|-------------------------|
| Sheffield<br>N=35<br>(33 Liberian and 2 Congolese)<br>(23 women and 12 men)<br>Lead agency = Refugee Council | Wave 1 (6 –8 weeks)                        | Qualitative topic-guided interview  | May – June 2004         |
|  | Wave 2 (6 months)                          | Qualitative topic-guided interview  | November 2004           |
|  | Wave 3 (18 months)                         | Qualitative topic-guided interview  | October 2005            |
| Bolton<br>N=44<br>(32 Liberian and 12 Congolese)<br>(30 women and 14 men)<br>Lead agency = Refugee Action    | Wave 1 (6 months)                          | Qualitative topic-guided interview  | June – August 2005      |
|  | Wave 2 (18 months)                         | Interview guided by structured questionnaire with closed and open questions | July – August 2006      |
| Hull<br><br>N=23 (All Congolese)<br>(11 women and 12 men)<br>Lead agency = Refugee Council                   | Wave 1 (10 –11 months)                     | Self-completion questionnaire with mostly closed questions                  | January – February 2007 |
| Rochdale<br>N=27 (All Congolese)<br>(12 women and 15 men)<br>Lead agency = Rochdale Borough Council          | Wave 1 (10 –11 months)                     | Self-completion questionnaire with mostly closed questions                  | February 2007           |

### 3 Results: progress towards integration (outcomes, barriers and facilitators)

This chapter presents the research findings, exploring what they mean in terms of evidence about the processes and progress towards integration (as defined by the Home Office model) of Gateway refugees. The first sections (on participant characteristics, lead agency characteristics, the resettlement process, and orientation training) provide some contextual information. Then individual aspects of life (such as housing, education, health and social activities) that can provide indicators of integration are explored in turn. In each section an attempt is made to indicate possible barriers to, and facilitators of, integration, and to indicate implications for policy and practice.

#### Contextual information

##### *Between-groups comparison of participant characteristics*

The four groups differed substantially in characteristics likely to impact on resettlement experiences and rates of progress towards integration. These are highlighted briefly here and discussed in more detail in Appendix 3.

- Immigration status varied between and within groups. Some of those in Sheffield and Bolton had 'Indefinite leave to remain on an exceptional basis'; the others, and all Gateway refugees arriving after January 2006, were granted Convention<sup>4</sup> refugee status, following a change in Home Office policy. Convention refugees had advantages in terms of various rights including access to funding for higher education, Family Reunion rules and travel document costs and rules.
- The linguistic backgrounds of the people from the Democratic Republic of Congo meant they were disadvantaged in terms of English language acquisition compared with the Liberians, who already spoke English. The Hull and Rochdale groups were exclusively Congolese while the majority of those in the Sheffield and Bolton groups were Liberian.
- Of the adult refugees, the younger ones were most readily able to access education. The Sheffield group was by far the youngest, followed by the Bolton group. The Hull group was the oldest.
- In Hull and Rochdale almost all participants were living as part of a family and most were in a couple with dependent children. In Sheffield and Bolton the majority of participants were single, and many of these were single women with dependent children. In both of these groups there were also people who were living in the UK without family members.
- While the information available was limited, the indications were that levels of education and occupational experience varied between the Gateway groups. Those in Hull appeared to be the most highly qualified (half of the group reported having worked in professional occupations before coming to the UK) and those in Bolton and Sheffield appeared to be the least educated.

### **Lead agency characteristics**

The lead agency for Gateway in each area co-ordinates services and provides caseworker support for a 12-month period. It is guided by the terms of its Home Office grant agreement but there is flexibility about how it works to meet its objectives.<sup>5</sup> The lead agencies, their partnerships, networks, and approaches to delivery varied between areas.

In Sheffield and Hull the lead agency role was filled by a voluntary sector organisation, the Refugee Council (RC). As the group in Sheffield was the first Gateway group to arrive, the refugees in that group were exposed to some initial difficulties and barriers that were overcome for subsequent groups.

In Bolton the lead agency was another voluntary sector organisation, Refugee Action (RA). The Bolton group was only the second Gateway group and the first such group in Bolton. This group too was affected by some of the programme's early challenges.

Both the RC and RA had been involved in development of Gateway and drew upon extensive experience of working with refugees and asylum seekers. In each case, however, they were working with the first Gateway group to be resettled in a particular area.

The Rochdale group was the first Gateway group to be resettled under a lead agency team from the local authority (in this case, the Rochdale Borough Council Asylum Team). The asylum team used many of its existing facilities, services, links and processes to deliver the Gateway support in Rochdale.

### **The resettlement process**

The resettlement process<sup>6</sup> was explored in detail with the Sheffield group, at the interviews one month after resettlement. Indications were that the process by which refugees became aware of the possibility of resettlement, and how to apply, varied across the group. Some were approached by UNHCR officials, or heard from officials of other NGOs; others learned by word of mouth, by reading notice boards or even through the BBC.

Generally, being accepted for resettlement in the UK was associated with feelings of elation and relief at being able to escape from their situation. Some reported confusion about the assessment process and rules regarding which family members could be considered for resettlement together or future Family Reunion. Some said they had withheld information, fearing it would lead to rejection of their applications.

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4 The UNHCR website gives details of what Convention refugee status is and what it means for those in the UK. [http://www.unhcr.org.uk/info/briefings/basic\\_facts/definitions.html](http://www.unhcr.org.uk/info/briefings/basic_facts/definitions.html)

5 Details of the role of the Gateway lead agency are provided in Appendix I.

6 An overview of the resettlement process is provided in Appendix I.

The information about experiences of the first Gateway group led to improvements to the resettlement processes for subsequent groups, in terms of the information provided and issues that needed to be highlighted for the refugees.

### **Orientation training**

The orientation sessions, both prior to departure and on arrival in the UK, were generally praised and perceived as having prepared refugees quite well for life in the UK.

Nevertheless, some had arrived with unrealistically high expectations, or misconceptions, about some aspects of their new life in the UK. In some cases this related to material provisions, and housing; in others to opportunities and funding for adult education; and in others to employment prospects.

Refugees in Hull and Rochdale suggested additional information or training would have been useful on: clothing; child and adult education; the cold weather; gaining employment; how to train to work in the UK in their former occupation; transport; English language; budgeting; and UK laws, practices and culture.

## **Individual aspects of life**

### **Housing**

Housing in the resettlement area was arranged, and quality assured, by lead agencies and provided in partnership with housing associations and local authorities. Most housing was in the public and social housing sector, but a minority of provision was through the private rented sector with arrangements brokered by a housing association. In Sheffield, Bolton, and Hull, housing was dispersed over the town with some clustering to ensure that no refugee was geographically isolated from other Gateway refugees. Arrangements in Rochdale were quite distinctive: all refugees there were housed in local authority flats on one of two ethnically diverse estates in the town and so they were living in close proximity to each other. In all areas, refugees were responsible for signing tenancy agreements and paying the rent. In almost all cases, on arrival in the resettlement area, refugees moved into housing where they were able to stay for at least 12 months.

Housing was equipped with basic fittings and furnishings, fridges, ovens, and sometimes washing machines. Basic foodstuffs were also provided when the refugees moved in. By 18 months, in Sheffield and Bolton, most refugees had acquired additional furniture, and especially electrical goods, through charitable donations from new friends, neighbours, churches and charities. In other cases, people lived frugally and saved to buy such goods.

Initial reaction to moving into new homes was one of delight and gratitude. Over time, some discontent arose in response to: problems with housing conditions; conditions in the local area; changes in family composition through marital breakdown or births; and comparisons with other members of the group. By 18 months, more than half the Bolton group had managed to move house, generally helped by the council or a housing association.

While many still hoped to move house, at ten months in Hull and Rochdale, and 18 months in Bolton, at least two-thirds of refugees were satisfied with their homes. Factors influencing satisfaction did not appear to vary markedly over time from resettlement or between the four groups. Primary reasons were having good or friendly neighbours and liking the area. Proximity to public amenities, children's schools, shops, places of worship, and access to public transport were also mentioned. Liking the property itself was also a factor across groups, and the most common factor in Bolton at 18 months. In Rochdale alone, one of the reasons for housing satisfaction was the perceived affordability of the council housing.

### **Accessing benefits and managing money**

Lead agencies liaised with Jobcentre Plus to facilitate access to all appropriate benefits. For all groups, across all the time points covered by the research, refugees were largely dependent on benefits for income. Refugees generally and persistently said they found it difficult to budget for food and bills, and were fearful of getting into debt. Some refugee-specific issues were identified.

- Many experienced difficulties managing the fuel bills they were generating in their efforts to cope with the colder UK climate.



- Many had difficulties opening bank accounts in Sheffield, Bolton, and Rochdale because their identity documents were not recognised.
- In Bolton at 18 months, around half of households were sending money back to Africa (a crude estimate of the average amount sent would be around £2 per week).
- Some were trying to save for visas for family members to join them.

Generally, refugees were frustrated at being dependent on benefits and not being able to find work. There were some, however, who wanted to study first and found their ambitions frustrated by rules around receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, Education Maintenance Allowance, or funding for higher education.

When people found paid work this tended to be temporary and at minimum wage level. There were reports from Sheffield, Rochdale and Hull that discontinuous employment caused hardship because of time lags in stopping and starting different benefits.

More guidance on how to combine work and/or study with claiming benefits, or temporary work with claiming benefits might help. Some refugees suggested that it would have helped if, during their first year in the UK, there could have been more flexibility in the rules around benefits, study, and work.

## Adult education

### ***English language skills and 'English for speakers of other languages' (ESOL) training***

Refugees saw proficiency in English language as fundamental to living fully and productively in the UK. Limited English skills were perceived as the most pervasive barrier to accessing education and both voluntary and paid employment. Poor English was also seen as a barrier to accessing services and developing social relationships beyond the Gateway group.

Initial access to ESOL provision was facilitated by the lead agency in each of the four areas. Almost all refugees had gained some formal ESOL training by the time of the last research visit to their resettlement area. There were variations within and between groups in terms of timing of access, amount of training, and training providers. Some Gateway refugees, particularly the Congolese in Hull and Rochdale, and service providers raised concerns about the limited availability, quality and appropriateness of ESOL provision.

By 18 months, Jobcentre Plus in Bolton had directed many Gateway refugees to a generally well-received, and intensive (up to 26 weeks study, 5 days per week) course of ESOL plus basic numeracy, literacy, and IT skills. Those in Bolton with greater English skills were referred to FE colleges instead. Some Bolton refugees found initial courses pitched at too low a level and would have preferred to have proceeded more rapidly with vocational education.

In Hull and Rochdale at ten months, the norm for refugees' attendance at ESOL classes appeared to be two two-hour sessions per week. Some refugees managed to attend more sessions and others, particularly women with young children, went to fewer sessions. In both areas, ESOL classes were provided by a range of organisations including those from state, voluntary and private sectors. Perhaps as a result of this diversity, provision was not always well coordinated.

There were indications that both the Liberians and the Congolese were generally improving and gaining confidence in their English language skills. Requests for interpretation at the IRS interviews in Sheffield and Bolton decreased over time but, at 18 months, around a quarter of each group were still interviewed through an interpreter; these refugees were mainly married women.

Reports of ESOL level attainment were incomplete; refugees studying at the lower levels, in particular, seemed unclear about their level. Indications were that, by 18 months, around two-fifths of the Bolton group (mainly the Liberians) may have reached a level equivalent to ESOL Entry level 3<sup>7</sup> or above. At ten months, in Hull, around two-fifths, and, in Rochdale, around one-third, appeared to have been studying ESOL at Entry level 3 or above.

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7 Among the Gateway groups, this appeared to be the level that enabled entry to further education, such as GCSEs and NVQs, and beyond. The DIUS link provides details of the curriculum for ESOL Entry level 3. [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Entry\\_3](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/Entry_3)

Self-reports of how well they managed in terms of using the English language in day-to-day life<sup>8</sup> also gave a positive impression of the Bolton group's confidence at 18 months. Half of the group said they managed very well, and almost all others thought they 'did OK'. In spite of their reluctance to be interviewed without an interpreter, just one Congolese woman thought that she did not get by very well. In contrast, less than a quarter of the group in Hull, and less than half of the group in Rochdale, thought that they spoke English and understood written and spoken English at least 'fairly well'. Four of the group in Rochdale and five of the group in Hull said they did not speak English or understand spoken English at all. All but one of these were women.

Other issues around developing English language skills were identified as follows.

- Women with children accessed the least ESOL education and made least progress. Lack of childcare is a barrier, but other practical difficulties and social role expectancies may also need to be addressed. Different ESOL delivery contexts could be explored (e.g. the use of places the women already visit for other reasons, such as schools and nurseries).
- Rapid entry to full-time employment limits access to ESOL classes. For English skills to improve, either intensive ESOL needs to be made available as a priority in the early days after resettlement and/or provision needs to be flexible enough to accommodate temporary employment and shift working.
- All Gateway stakeholders might benefit from clear policy guidance on what their goals for ESOL should be, how achievement should be assessed, how provision should be linked with starting level, and what provision will be funded.
- At the end of the 12-month Gateway support period, refugees need to know how to access interpreters; otherwise some will be left unable to access other services on an equal footing with the wider community.

### **Adult education in general**

Access to free education was highly valued by the refugees, and seen by most as essential to enabling them to find satisfactory employment. From the earliest days to 18 months, almost everyone had hopes to study further. Participation in education increased over time. Differences within and between groups in the extent and type of participation appeared to reflect differences in English language skills, age, gender roles and prior education and employment.

By 18 months, almost two-thirds of the Sheffield group, and four-fifths of the Bolton group had been engaged in some education or training (including ESOL) over the preceding year. At ten months in Hull and Rochdale almost all had done some ESOL study and around two-fifths had undertaken some non-ESOL study. Women with children, particularly Congolese women, were far less likely than others to have been in any form of education, and non-ESOL education in particular.

Non-ESOL studies ranged from various lower level academic (e.g. GCSEs, foundation and access courses), and vocational qualifications (e.g. NVQs) and training (sewing, car mechanics), to university degrees (e.g. community development, physiotherapy). In Bolton, perhaps reflecting different starting points with respect to English, but also their relative youth, the Liberians appeared more likely to be engaged in higher level academic studies and the Congolese more likely to be taking ESOL or foundation courses. Bias towards academic study in Hull and more vocational training in Rochdale mirrored the apparent differences in refugees' educational and occupational backgrounds.

Most saw the need to gain or consolidate English skills as a priority. Longer-term educational aspirations were focused on the occupational opportunities they would provide. Among the older people, ambitions generally reflected past occupations or training. Refugees with professional qualifications (e.g. teaching, nursing) from their own country wanted to study to qualify to work in similar professions in the UK. Those with skilled trades (e.g. sewing, baking, hairdressing, and plumbing) hoped to train to pursue these.

Among the few in Bolton, Hull and Rochdale who did not want to pursue further study, reasons given were: preferring to pursue work immediately; being busy caring for their children; and ill health.

<sup>8</sup> Clearly this is a highly subjective appraisal – and individuals will differ in their frames of reference. For example, a person studying at university might have a different understanding of their level of language skills compared to someone who speaks English only when going shopping. Both of them might consider themselves doing OK although their level of language skills might differ.

### **Sources of information about courses**

In all areas, the lead agency case workers were the principal source of information and principal facilitators of access to courses. Other sources of information about courses were: refugee and community organisations, friends and relatives, the LEA, Learn Direct, or the public library. Jobcentre Plus was also an important source of information in Hull and Rochdale, but less so in Bolton. In Bolton, around one-quarter had found out directly from colleges or schools. Some college tutors were seen as particularly helpful and caring.

### **Barriers to education**

The barriers to further study reported by refugees in Sheffield and Bolton differed somewhat from those reported by those in Hull and Rochdale. Again, the differences may reflect the different demographic make-up of the groups, differences in service provision, differences in immigration status between the groups, and the different time points after resettlement at which information was gathered. At ten months, the Hull and Rochdale groups were still largely focused on gaining an adequate level of English in order to pursue employment or further study; the Sheffield and Bolton groups, at 18 months, were generally more focused on pursuing further and higher education.

In Hull and Rochdale, at ten months almost everyone perceived there to be at least one barrier to pursuing studies. These were: problems with English (three-quarters of the group); not knowing how to find out about courses (one-third); not enough time to study (one-third); courses being full; courses being too expensive; discrimination; and childcare demands.

By 18 months, almost one-quarter of the Bolton group perceived no barriers to study. Among the rest of the group, issues were:

- problems funding studies (one-third);
- not enough time to study (one-quarter);
- problems with English (less than one-fifth);
- not knowing how to find out about courses (less than one-fifth);
- child care demands;
- health problems;
- not hearing back about applications;
- non-UK qualifications not being accepted; and
- courses being full.

In Bolton at 18 months, those aged 21 years or under were much less likely than others to perceive any barriers. Those studying were less likely than others to perceive any barriers, and, for these, time and money were the key issues. These were also key issues in Sheffield. Men were less likely than women to perceive any barriers; for men the cost of study, and for women the language barrier, were the dominant problems. In spite of the hurdles, a few men in each group were studying at university and working towards their desired careers.

## **Employment**

Finding paid employment was an overriding and enduring concern for all the groups. Refugees wanted to give back to the society that had rescued them, and to provide for their families independently of state benefits. Refugees' expectations of the employment opportunities open to them, and their speed in finding work, far exceeded the reality. Those with qualifications and professional experience from outside the UK found that there were numerous barriers to taking up their former occupations.

Those with more limited qualifications or experience hoped that they could obtain training in the UK that would enable them to find skilled or semi-skilled employment. Rules for claiming Jobseeker's Allowance made this a challenge. Many refugees endeavoured to find any kind of paid employment.

At the last interviews in Bolton, Hull, and Rochdale, between one-third and two-thirds of women and almost all men said that they were looking for work. In all three areas, job-seeking refugees submitted many applications. Male job applicants were more likely than female job applicants to have been interviewed for any job. Job applicants in Bolton and Rochdale

were more likely to have been interviewed than those in Hull. While a few of the more highly qualified refugees persisted in seeking a particular type of work, most were applying for anything they thought they could do.

Table 2 shows the number in each group ever employed in the UK and employed at the time of the last interview. Gateway refugees in Hull appeared least likely to have found paid work and men in Rochdale most likely. The relatively high female rate of employment experience in Bolton was restricted to single women; most had dependent children and all but one were Liberian.

Where paid work was found it was almost always in unskilled jobs, often through agencies, and of a low-paid, temporary nature. Very few people appeared to have had extended periods doing the same, or any job. People hoped that having some UK work experience would help to secure better employment in the future. Details of employment for each group are provided in Appendix 4.

**Table 2** *Number in each group who had ever worked in the UK and working at the time of the last IRS interview*

|                                    | Sheffield<br>(at 18<br>months) | Bolton (at 18 months) |       | Hull (at 10 months) |       | Rochdale (at 10<br>months) |       |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|                                    | All                            | Men                   | Women | Men                 | Women | Men                        | Women |
| Ever worked in the UK              | Not known                      | 6                     | 10    | 3                   | 0     | 10                         | 0     |
| Employed at time of last interview | 8                              | 2                     | 3     | 1                   | 0     | 6                          | 0     |
| Base (n)                           | 33                             | 14                    | 30    | 12                  | 11    | 15                         | 12    |

### **Barriers to employment**

Refugees perceived the following issues to be barriers to employment:

- English language skills (four-fifths in Hull and Rochdale, one-quarter in Bolton);
- lack of UK work experience, recognised qualifications or references (half in Bolton, Hull and Rochdale);
- negative discrimination (one-tenth in Bolton, one-quarter in Hull, no-one in Rochdale);
- Home Office ID not being recognised;
- shortage of jobs locally;
- health problems;
- lack of childcare;
- not knowing how to find work; and
- transport problems.

Other factors, mentioned by service providers, were: inability to obtain Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance and competition from recent European Union migrants.

### **Facilitators to employment**

The more fruitful job-seeking in Rochdale was facilitated by the intervention of the lead agency there. Support workers had approached all the employment agencies in the area outlining their refugees' skill profile and asking for them to be considered for employment. The importance of this action was reflected in the prominence Rochdale refugees gave to the lead agency staff as a source of help with job-hunting. Friends and relatives were also an important source of help for the close-knit Rochdale group. In Rochdale, as in Sheffield, and among women in Bolton, it appeared that there was some 'snowballing' of employment: one person found a job and then introduced friends.

In all areas, Jobcentre Plus was also an important source of help, especially for those seeking unskilled work. In Bolton, at 18 months, employment agencies were frequently mentioned.

## Volunteering

Lead agency staff discussed with the Gateway refugees the potential gains associated with volunteering and attempted to provide opportunities. Table 3 shows the number of men and women volunteering in Bolton, Hull, and Rochdale. As with paid work, married women were under-represented among the volunteers.

|  | Bolton (at 18 months) |       | Hull ( at 10 months) |       | Rochdale (at 10 months) |       |
|--|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
|  | Men                   | Women | Men                  | Women | Men                     | Women |
| Ever volunteered                       | 3                     | 6     | 5                    | 0     | 7                       | 2     |
| Volunteering at time of last interview | 2                     | 4     | 3                    | 0     | 2                       | 0     |
| Base (n)                               | 14                    | 30    | 12                   | 11    | 15                      | 12    |

Volunteering activities fell into three broad categories: work with refugee or African community organisations; work with wider voluntary sector organisations; and unpaid work experience. Volunteering experiences of most of the Gateway refugees in Bolton and Hull, and of the women in Rochdale, fell into the first category. Men tended to take on organisational roles in community organisations. Women had helped prepare meals, look after children, and run sewing classes or homework clubs. Women's involvement was less enduring than that of men.

One or two men in each area had volunteered in organisations bringing them into contact with the wider community (e.g. an Age Concern café, a charity shop or the Police volunteers). One had specifically opted for such volunteering in order to improve his English.

Volunteering opportunities in the third category, where refugees were looking for specific work experience, were hardest to find. The issue of CRB clearance may have contributed to this. Nevertheless, half of the men volunteering in Rochdale had gained this kind of experience. Two men had been helped to volunteer as car mechanics. One former teacher had volunteered as a teaching assistant in a local school. After extensive searching, a physiotherapist had found a volunteering placement as an assistant physiotherapist.

Refugees' comments suggest that their focus is on volunteering that will lead to paid work. Across the groups, however, there was only one case where a direct link between volunteering and employment could be seen. A voluntary teaching assistant's post led to a paid post in the same school.

Setting up volunteering opportunities, particularly, outside the voluntary sector where organisations to facilitate this already exist, may be a real challenge for Gateway service providers. Finding and managing voluntary/unpaid work opportunities to meet the needs of individual refugees is likely to be resource-intensive. Good management is required to ensure refugees are not exploited.

Women with dependent children are under-represented among volunteers. It may be unreasonable to expect that these women would want to take on additional work, and the need for childcare limits the type of volunteering that they may be able to do. On the other hand, getting mothers into part-time or occasional volunteering, as happened in Rochdale, could be an important way of improving their integration outcomes, reducing isolation and boosting confidence.

## Healthcare

All refugees were registered with GPs within a short time of arrival in the UK. Between half and two-thirds of the Bolton, Hull and Rochdale groups reported some physical health problems. In all areas, most people had sought medical treatment and most of these were happy with the treatment they had received. Women were more likely than men to report physical health problems but less likely to consult about them. Some women in each area complained of persistent aches and pains which their doctors had investigated but had been unable to make a diagnosis. In Bolton, refugees' health appeared to improve between the 6- and 18-month interviews.

In Hull and Rochdale refugees were asked about experience of 'emotional problems'. More than half in each area reported having been at least slightly bothered by emotional problems. Men and women were equally likely to report some degree of emotional upset. Around two-thirds of those affected in Hull compared with around half of those in Rochdale had consulted a health professional. Most were at least fairly satisfied with the care given.

#### Barriers to access to healthcare

In spite of the general satisfaction with healthcare received, a number of potential barriers to access were identified.

- Half the group in Hull and two-thirds in Rochdale reported some difficulty accessing healthcare and in almost every case this was ascribed to the language barrier.
- Access to interpretation for healthcare varied between groups.
- Cultural differences and unrealistic expectations about medical treatment sometimes caused difficulties.
- Access to appropriate mental healthcare was still limited in many areas.

#### **Facilitators of access to healthcare**

Gateway staff facilitated access in several ways.

- The lead agencies helped refugees to register with GPs.
- Lead agency staff worked hard to arrange interpretation where necessary and, in the early days, supported refugees in making and attending appointments.
- Gateway has been collaborating with the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture to facilitate access to specialist care for refugees, when necessary.

### **Social connections and community integration (bonds, bridges and links)**

#### **Family in the UK**

As noted, one of the key demographic differences between the Gateway groups included in the IRS research is in family composition. The family situation of refugees appeared to have a considerable effect on their progress. The evidence from Bolton at 18 months was that the young single people with non-dependent family in the UK appeared to be doing especially well. Many were making good progress with their education, had friends and were optimistic about their futures. They could slowly forge contacts with the wider receiving community and culture while being able to return to the comfort of being part of a unit with shared language, culture and history. In contrast, there were some cases of family tension, sometimes leading to young people leaving or wanting to leave their parent's or guardian's home.

At 18 months, those without adult relatives in Bolton appeared least happy and supported. Many single parents raised the issue of lacking a partner. Where they had been separated from a partner, through a variety of circumstances, but believed them to be alive in Africa, they tended to express a desire for their partner to join them.

The family could, however, also be a constraint. Cultural expectations, particularly around the roles of women, could limit individuals' freedom to engage with the wider society. In each of Sheffield, Bolton and Hull, there were one or two cases of marital breakdown after resettlement.

Lone adult refugees might benefit from special efforts to link them with community groups and befriending schemes.

#### **Family reunion**

The concern for family left behind in Africa was an issue across Gateway groups and endured over the time periods covered by the IRS research. Many people kept in touch with those left behind and sent money back when they could. People expressed hopes that family members would be allowed to join them in the UK under Family Reunion rules, and many made applications for this. In some cases, applications were being made for dependent children who had been lost during the war and subsequently traced. Others were for partners, or for people the refugees believed to be especially vulnerable and towards whom they felt an obligation of care, e.g. orphaned nieces or nephews, or elderly or

sick relatives. The process for Family Reunion appeared complex and slow such that, even at the 18-month interviews in Sheffield and Bolton, few refugees knew the outcome of their applications. The uncertainty of the process could be a source of enduring stress.

By ten months, Family Reunion had been applied for by one-third of households in Hull and around one-quarter of households in Rochdale and, by 18 months, by just under two-fifths of households in Bolton. In Bolton those (two men and four women) who said they had a partner not in the UK were most likely to have applied.

As a result of learning from experience with the first two groups, improved information about Family Reunion rules and processes was provided to Gateway refugees. The complexity of the process was still daunting, and lead agencies did not have the resources to deal with this issue. Refugees would benefit from signposting to good legal advice. In Bolton a number of refugees mentioned turning to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, where a specialist immigration adviser was available.

### **Friends**

Among all four groups and over time, refugees maintained contact with friends and family outside the UK. It was also clear that for most refugees, friendships with other Gateway refugees endured and often appeared to be the strongest bonds outside the immediate family.

In all areas the lead agency staff, often aided by other voluntary sector organisations, facilitated the setting up of various Gateway community-based activities or groups. These included: a Liberian church, a women's choir, women's groups, football teams, an allotment project, sewing classes, trips, social meetings and celebrations. In spite of the best efforts of Gateway service providers, relationships within the Gateway groups were, inevitably, not always harmonious. Conflicts sometimes escalated to the point where intervention was required.

Over time, most refugees were slowly forging friendships outside the Gateway group. Friendships were explored in most detail in Bolton at 18 months. There, all but one person said they had met new friends since coming to the UK, but these often included friendships with other Gateway refugees. Around one-quarter of the group had met new friends through their education. The second most frequently mentioned way of making friends was through places of religious worship and associated activities. Men and women were equally likely to have met people through this route.

Meeting people through relatives and existing friendships or through neighbours were also frequent occurrences. Some reported meeting people in public spaces, just getting talking while out and about. Community groups and sports activities were also cited. The differences between men's and women's lives were reflected in their sources of friendships. Men were especially more likely than women to have made friends through community group and sports participation, and to a lesser extent through education, and other friends or relatives. Women were more likely than men to have made friends through neighbours and out and about in public places. Comments suggested that this tended to happen when they heard people speaking their language or identified people as of African origin.

Men were more likely than women to report having friends from across the ethnic spectrum, though, in general, friendships with other Africans appeared to predominate. Some women commented that neighbours were friendly but that the language barrier constrained relationships.

A few of the young single people had busy social lives, mixing with other Gateway refugees, and other Africans in Bolton. Comments from a few of the young women studying at a college for further education suggested a cultural barrier to forming friendships and socialising. They did not want to engage in the drinking, smoking and other behaviours that some of their British peers were perceived to favour.

A few individuals, in Hull and Rochdale at 10 months and Bolton at 18 months, appeared extremely isolated; for various reasons they were unable to find friendships within the Gateway group or outside. These isolated people included some in the UK with family members as well as a very few living alone. Lead agencies endeavoured to foster and facilitate social engagement and networking for Gateway refugees, but there may be scope for greater focus on identifying and helping individuals who are excluded or exclude themselves. Signposting to specialist counselling or befriending schemes might be helpful in some cases.

### **Other sources of support**

For all groups, formal lead agency caseworker support lasted 12 months. Caseworker support, in spite of differing approaches to delivery between areas, was almost universally highly valued. Caseworkers provided orientation, practical, social and, sometimes, emotional support. In all areas there was comment that support should have continued for longer for some people.

While caseworkers played a vital role in the early days after resettlement, over time many refugees got support from other agencies, organisations, or individuals. By ten months in Hull and Rochdale, the most frequently reported source of support, endorsed by more than three-quarters of refugees in each area, was Jobcentre Plus. In Rochdale other important sources were lead agency support workers closely followed by other Gateway refugees, and ESOL providers. In Hull, refugee community organisations and Safe Haven Housing were the second most frequently mentioned sources of support, with ESOL providers and lead agency caseworkers close thirds. Other Gateway refugees were far less important as a source of support in Hull than in Rochdale.

In Sheffield, the following organisations were mentioned as sources of support: the Northern Refugee Centre, Pakistani Muslim Centre, Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), Jobcentre Plus, police, churches and colleges.

In Bolton, at 18 months, by far the most frequently mentioned sources of help were friends and voluntary sector organisations, principally CAB. A few people mentioned their 'Time Together' mentor in this context. A housing association (St Vincent) and Befriending Refugees and Asylum Seekers (BRASS) were also mentioned. One-quarter of the group said that there was nobody that they turned to for help or advice now that they no longer had a caseworker. Women were twice as likely as men to say this. Many of these people were young (under 30 years of age), almost all said they got by in English in everyday life, and one-third had managed to gain some paid work experience since arriving in the UK. There were, however, two women for whom the response appeared to indicate unmet needs for support.

Lead agencies usually provided leaflets with 'signposting' information to help refugees identify who to contact for help beyond the 12-month support period. It is not clear how useful such materials are. For non-English speakers, translated materials may be of limited use if the service providers listed are not able to provide interpretation. Those most in need of ongoing support may be least able to access it.

### **Social contact with wider society**

Across all groups, places of worship were the most frequently visited places where social engagement with the wider community might take place. At 18 months, these played a key role in Sheffield, and were attended by more than half of the group in Bolton. In Bolton, the Congolese were more likely than the Liberians to attend. In Hull and Rochdale, at ten months, almost every refugee said they attended their place of worship at least once or twice a week.

The various refugee or national or ethnic group community organisations were also important points of contact for some refugees in all areas. In Bolton, just over one-quarter of the men, compared with one-tenth of women (one-sixth of the group overall) said they participated in a community group. In Hull and Rochdale, around one-third of the refugees in each area (both men and women) said they had at least monthly contact with organisations for their national or ethnic group.

Just under one-third of refugees in Hull, and just over one-sixth in Rochdale, said they had contact with other organisations that might link them to the wider community. In Bolton, at 18 months, almost half of the men and one woman had joined a sports club. About one-fifth of the group, predominantly men, visited other organisations, such as clubs associated with particular hobbies or activities. Other points of contact included: neighbours, workplaces, educational establishments, volunteering activities, parenting classes, children's activities, and tenants' associations.

### **Barriers to/ facilitators of social contact with wider society**

At 18 months, around one-quarter of the Gateway group in Bolton said they did not visit any clubs or organisations. Two-fifths of those in Rochdale and one-sixth of those in Hull did not appear to have contact with groups or organisations other than their place of worship.



Social bonds with the wider society may facilitate mutual understanding and learning around language and culture, and increase access to support and opportunities for the refugee group. Unfortunately, the lack of a common language can be a barrier to forming those social bonds. Education, paid work and volunteering may all potentially be bridges to the wider community. Unfortunately, among the Gateway groups studied, few refugees were involved in volunteering, particularly volunteering beyond the refugee community. Similarly, few were in paid work. Limited cultural knowledge, on the part of the refugees and the receiving community, may also be a barrier. Schools and community groups may need training to enable them effectively to include refugee groups. Purpose-specific mentoring schemes might be needed to help refugees gain knowledge and confidence at an early stage, so that they can form wider social connections more easily.

## **Safety and stability**

### ***Feelings of safety in the UK***

Across the groups, at all interview points, refugees remained overwhelmingly grateful that they had been helped to resettle in the UK. Although they expressed a range of concerns about their new lives, and particularly about employment, more than half of the refugees in both Hull and Rochdale rated themselves as 'very satisfied' with their lives in the UK, and most others were 'fairly satisfied'. The dominant factor underpinning this was the relative peace and safety that refugees found in the UK. In addition, refugees were happy to have material needs met (e.g. for housing, food, healthcare) and access to education, especially for their children. Some of those in Rochdale expressed concern for those remaining in the refugee camp and hoped that they too would be similarly assisted.

Typical statements about reasons for satisfaction with life in the UK (from Hull and Rochdale) are as follows.

*"Peace, security, freedom."*

*"Because I am looked after properly and it is very safe."*

*"When I compare my life here in the UK to what I had in Africa, this one is very high because I learn freely, eat, live safely and I receive benefits together with my family."*

*"I feel safe where I am and I do not have to flee from one place to another like I did in the past."*

*"Because my life is good and I was received warmly here."*

*"I have escaped from various crimes and violence. In short, I am in peace."*

### **Contentment with resettlement area**

In Hull and Rochdale at 10 months and Bolton at 18 months, most refugees said they wanted to stay in their resettlement area over the next 12 months. Two Bolton women had moved to London, and there were a few young single adults in Bolton who expressed a wish to move to UK cities in the future. Wanting to stay perhaps reflected satisfaction with their lives as well as realism about the difficulties associated with relocating. Growing familiarity with the area and friendships with other Gateway refugees may also have contributed. In Rochdale the special housing arrangements had fostered a particularly close-knit Gateway community where refugees often relied on each other for information and other support.

In Bolton at 18 months, more than four-fifths said that they liked the area in which they lived. The reasons they gave most frequently were: good neighbours; the area being quiet or peaceful; friendly people; good access to public transport; and good local shops. One-quarter of the respondents liked the area because it was safe or there was little crime.

The few who disliked some things about their area mentioned unfriendly or antisocial people in the area, crime, the area being unsafe and difficulty in accessing amenities.

### **Harassment and experience of crime in the UK**

Although people generally felt much safer in the UK than they had in their country of origin, unfortunately these feelings were sometimes threatened, both by fear of crime fuelled by reports in the UK media, and by refugees' direct experience of harassment and other crime. The number of people experiencing some form of harassment appeared to vary between resettlement areas, as did reporting of incidents to the police. Differences may reflect regional characteristics, housing arrangements and refugees' orientation training in an area. It is, however, also the case that the topic was approached differently with each group and at different research waves; variations in the terminology used in each case may also have contributed to apparent differences in incidence.

No attempt was made to quantify systematically the experience of harassment in Sheffield. Interviews there suggested that any harassment tended to come from neighbours or other locals and the perpetrators were often young people. By 18 months some harassment problems reported earlier had been addressed, but some had restarted and new ones had occurred.

Experience of harassment appears to have been a particular problem in Bolton, but refugees in Bolton also appear to have been most likely to have reported incidents to the police. At six months, many refugees reported experience of verbal abuse that they considered racist. At 18 months, just over half of the respondents, both men and women, reported experiencing some form of harassment. The majority of incidents were related to antisocial behaviour where the refugees lived (including vandalism and littering gardens and front doors) and racist name-calling. Often the abusers were children or teenagers. Another seven of the Bolton refugees had experienced other types of individual victimisation, including violent assault. There were also instances where respondents had been harassed by other Gateway refugees, and one where a refugee was left fearful after receiving telephone calls from an unknown fellow national, living outside Bolton.

For some of the Bolton refugees, feelings of safety were increased by having friendly neighbours around and by a highly visible police presence. Many respondents expressed trust in the British police and recalled having been advised, at their orientation training, to contact them in case of emergency. In contrast, at six months, some who had experienced harassment had either found reporting to the police unproductive, or had been reluctant to report for fear that this might jeopardize their right to remain in the UK. Encouragingly, at 18 months, 23 out of the 25 who said they had been victims of harassment had reported this to someone, and 15 had reported the incidents to the police. Others had spoken to: friends, neighbours, Victim Support, refugee organisations, caseworkers, or mentors. In some cases the problem was resolved through intervention of other parties, sometimes not. By 18 months, four families reported having moved house in order to escape harassment, and there were others who hoped to do so.

In Hull and Rochdale, at ten months, almost one-sixth of each group had experienced a physical attack and more than a quarter had been verbally attacked.<sup>9</sup> Only one person, a woman in Rochdale, had reported the incident to the police. One of the men in Rochdale commented that he had not gone to the police because he was concerned about speaking English at the police station. It should be noted that the Hull and Rochdale research did not establish whether the attacks were racially motivated or perceived as such, and some of the attacks may have occurred in the course of conflicts between members of the refugee group.

Safety might be enhanced by recruiting 'buddies' in the neighbourhood where refugees are housed. Buddies could befriend, look out for, and support refugees in the early days after arrival. They could act as ambassadors, facilitating refugees' access to and use of local amenities, and giving positive messages to other local people about the Gateway group.

Voluntary sector contributors to the Gateway programme have been building relationships with the police. It may be helpful for refugees to meet local police soon after arrival to help build mutual understanding and trust.

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<sup>9</sup> Refugees were asked if they had personally been the victim of a physical attack ("hit or kicked in a way that hurt you") or verbal attack ("insults or racial abuse") since arriving in the UK.

## **Cultural knowledge, rights and citizenship**

### ***Cultural knowledge***

Refugees received targeted guidance on the cultural norms and laws of the UK both prior to and shortly after arriving. This understanding was developed further by the lead agencies. Orientation for the groups reported on here included particular efforts to ensure that people were clear about UK legislation on issues such as women's rights, treatment of children, and female genital mutilation.

At 18 months in Bolton, refugees were asked about the sources they used to find out about life in the UK; most of them cited newspapers or magazines, television, and radio. Commenting on key cultural differences between the UK and their own country, one common theme was bad behaviour among British children and youths and the lack of intervention in this by adults. Another was the style of social interactions and their significance. People in the UK were perceived as generally polite, but less open and friendly than their African counterparts.

Adjusting to English food was another issue for some in Bolton and Hull. Some refugees suggested it would help to have training about British food and food preparation in the UK.

### ***Citizenship and documentation***

Across the groups, overwhelmingly and enduringly, the message from the Gateway refugees was one of gratitude at having been given the opportunity to settle in the UK. Indications were that most had no intention of leaving the UK but the prospect of being able to qualify for British citizenship was still a long way off.

In Bolton at six months and Sheffield at 18 months, feeling settled was closely linked with feeling safe and free of fear. Refugees who had experienced racism or violent incidents without satisfactory resolution were left feeling fearful and vulnerable but most refugees were happy to stay in the UK.

In Bolton, at 18 months, all said that they wanted to stay in the UK, and almost all wanted to become British citizens. It was, however, clear that many refugees had limited understanding of the citizenship requirements, or the rights and responsibilities that went with it. A few individuals in the Bolton group, and similarly in Rochdale, were not even certain whether they had the right to remain in the UK long-term.

In Sheffield and Bolton, focus tended to be on the desirability of a British passport as a badge of equality with other citizens, for its status as an identity document, and for the freedom of movement it permitted. Even at the 18-month interviews a key issue was the lack of a universally recognised and accepted form of identification. On arrival, refugees were issued with a Home Office Immigration Status Document (ISD). For many this was their only form of identification and it was often rejected by bank staff and prospective employers. There was frequent comment, from both the refugees and lead agency staff, about the difficulties this caused, particularly in relation to obtaining work and opening bank accounts. In spite of the Home Office issuing refugees in Bolton with an explanatory letter to accompany the ISD, including a Home Office contact number, problems with acceptance of the ISD persisted at the time of the Hull and Rochdale research.

Refugees in Bolton, Hull and Rochdale, aided by the lead agencies and Gateway partners, were creatively circumventing the ISD problem by obtaining provisional driving licences. At 18 months in Bolton, 12 people, including two women, had driving licences; nearly all were provisional.

Another issue raised repeatedly at the Bolton 18-month interviews was that of difficulties around obtaining travel documents. For the Bolton and Sheffield groups, the issue of travel documents was particularly contentious because the rules and costs varied with immigration status. Some pointed out the large amounts of money involved; others the difficulty they faced in fulfilling the requirements to obtain them. By 18 months, 14 of the group in Bolton had obtained a Home Office travel document; many others were still hoping to obtain one.

As noted, the experiences of the first two groups informed the Gateway programme. By the time the Hull and Rochdale groups arrived, all accepted refugees were granted convention refugee status. By ten months the lead agency in Hull had ensured that the whole group had obtained travel documents.

## Integration of dependent children

Information about the integration of dependent children was gathered from parents. The qualitative interviews in Sheffield and Bolton provided some limited information. This was supplemented at the 18-month interviews in Bolton when one person per household, usually the mother, was asked questions about each child in the household. In Hull and Rochdale, children were not specifically enquired about but some individuals spontaneously raised issues concerning them.

### **Education**

In all areas, the prospect of children receiving an education in the UK was highly valued. There were generally positive comments about the opportunities open to children in the UK and a perception that children were settling into school, making friends, and improving their English. Parents perceived school to be an important facilitator of their children's integration. There were, however, some issues around children's education that appeared not to have always been effectively addressed. Left unresolved, they could act as barriers to integration for children and their families.

In both Sheffield and Bolton there were instances of children getting into trouble at school, communication difficulties, and bullying. Some Sheffield parents suggested that their children's backgrounds might make it more difficult for them to settle and to form relationships with peers, and that extra support might be required. Children's English language improved over time, but in some cases language difficulties hampered communication between parents and schools. There was no suggestion in any area that schools would use interpretation services to facilitate communication with Gateway parents. There may be value in improving the process for induction of Gateway children and parents into schools, and perhaps encouraging schools to facilitate 'buddying' schemes whereby Gateway parents are linked with established parents.

In Bolton at six months, and Rochdale at ten months, concerns were voiced about the ability of children, especially those of secondary school age, to catch up with peers in the UK system where allocation to school year is based on age. The role of specialist help was acknowledged but was not always felt to be adequate to help children overcome the language difficulties and help them to make up for lost time. The level of concern about children's facility with the English language or ability to catch up with peers appeared to diminish by 18 months in Sheffield and Bolton. It is possible that this is an indication that, over time, specialist support services in those areas were effective.

Other concerns raised in Bolton at six months were: parents being unable to participate in school life because of childcare commitments; the perceived lack of discipline at school; lack of appropriate study spaces in the home; and ability to finance further education for older children.

### **Children in Bolton at 18 months after resettlement**

Information about the situation, at 18 months, of 45 children (aged between three months and 18 years) living in the 19 Bolton households, was provided by parents. Most of the 45 children reported on here were biological sons or daughters. Another five young people, aged between 17 and 18 years, were interviewed in their own right, and so are reported on in the other sections of this report.

Just under half (19) of the 45 children had suffered health problems (most often colds) in the previous 12 months; these persisted in seven cases. In all but two cases parents had sought medical treatment for their children; nearly all were happy with the treatment received.

At 18 months, most children were in primary school or secondary school. Two of the oldest were attending sixth-form college, and four of the youngest were attending a pre-school playgroup or nursery. One-quarter (9) of those attending school, all aged between seven and fourteen years, were said to have had problems at their school. Generally, these were around children being disruptive or getting into fights, or being teased or taunted. Other problems were around academic performance and being able to keep up. In at least three cases, problems had been successfully tackled with support from the schools involved.

**Table 4 Children reported on in Bolton: age (at 18 months after resettlement) and nationality**

| Age            | Nationality |          |
|----------------|-------------|----------|
|                | Congolese   | Liberian |
| Under 5 years  | 9           | 5        |
| 5 to 10 years  | 4           | 7        |
| 11 to 16 years | 6           | 13       |
| 17 to 18 years | 0           | 1        |
| Total          | 19          | 26       |

Four-fifths (24) of the children aged five years and over attended some kind of club or organisation. Around two-thirds of these participated in a sports club, usually associated with their school. Just over one-third attended activities associated with a place of religious worship. Almost all children aged five years and above were reported to have made new friends since arriving in the UK.

Parents reported that around half (16) of those (31) children aged five years or over had experienced harassment. The response to this depended on the source of the harassment. Usually, school staff were informed if harassment occurred at school, or involved school children. In almost half of the cases (7) the police had been contacted. In other cases the caseworker, housing association staff, or friends were told. In just a few cases the matter was kept within the family.

## 4. Conclusions

The IRS research provides information about integration only up to 18 months after resettlement. Integration is a long process and so the findings presented here can give only an indication of longer-term integration prospects. The findings also highlight aspects of the Gateway programme that are working well and indicate strategies for tackling barriers that persist.

Gateway refugees were enduringly grateful for having been resettled and planned to stay in the UK. The relative peace and safety of the UK was central to this. The Gateway lead agencies met their basic material needs (access to permanent furnished housing, state benefits, and healthcare) and helped with orientation by providing local and cultural information and 'signposting' to education and employment opportunities.

Progress towards integration was apparent. At the time of the final interview (10 months in Hull and Rochdale and 18 months in Sheffield and Bolton), all participants and their children were accessing services; most had formed social bonds through places of worship and community groups and some were gradually building relationships through education, volunteering, contact with neighbours and, occasionally, employment.

Incidence of harassment was not assessed in a consistent way across the research but rates appeared to vary between the areas. When asked about reporting of harassment, those in Bolton were most likely to have reported such incidents to the police or others with authority (e.g. schools, housing associations).

The biggest concern for Gateway refugees and service providers was the slow rate of progress with English language skills and employment. Limited access to ESOL compounded the difficulties of the Congolese in particular. Poor English skills were generally seen as the most important and enduring barrier to progress as judged on all other indicators of integration.

Employment rates remained low across groups and over time but there was also variation between the groups. English skills, references, recognition of qualifications and experience, lack of qualifications and UK experience were the primary barriers that refugees perceived. Intervention with employers by service providers, as occurred in Rochdale, may be an effective

facilitator. The nature of employment gained seldom appeared likely to improve longer-term prospects or integration, or to enable refugees to make plans. Only longer-term assessment will show whether this is the case.

Indications were that some refugees were distressed about the Family Reunion application process. Few had received application results before the conclusion of the research so the outcomes and the possible impact of those outcomes is not known.

Characteristics of the Gateway groups (e.g. nationality, language, education and employment history, gender, age, family structures) and of the receiving area, and the wider government policy context, concurrently determine needs, resources and integration outcomes. Delivery needs to be flexible to respond to individual circumstances, but broad strategies could be designed to better address the needs of some sub-groups.

Children and young adults appeared to be making best progress; education gave them a route into society. For them, a key issue may be extended access to educational funding to enable them to catch up with studies, and more thorough inductions into schools and colleges to ensure mutual understanding.

Women, particularly those with young children, and even more so married women with children, appeared to be making least progress. Childcare demands and social roles limited access to ESOL and other education, and also to volunteering. Though a number of women hoped to work, it may be necessary to prioritise strategies for improving social integration and language skills for this group in particular.

There was evidence of growing desperation and frustration among those left unemployed. Perhaps due to social roles and rules around benefits (such as Jobseeker's Allowance) this was most marked among men.

The few lone adults in the groups appeared especially vulnerable. Close monitoring and repeated 'signposting' to sources of social support or mental healthcare may help. Special consideration might be given to Family Reunion requests for such cases.

Lead agency caseworkers were important facilitators of integration for the Gateway groups. Partners in delivery of Gateway (e.g. Jobcentre Plus) are able to share learning and best practice locally and through a national steering group. This has influenced policy and practice over time and progressively benefited new groups. Since the arrival of the first groups, improvements have been made to pre-departure and post-arrival orientation information, and identity documents. Now all Gateway refugees are granted convention status on arrival.

Social networks were also important facilitators as well as indicators of integration. Arriving as a group, the Gateway refugees themselves are an important source of mutual support. Where new groups have arrived in a Gateway resettlement area, earlier arrivals have volunteered to befriend them. Existing community groups, especially those for refugees or African groups, also provided information and opportunities.

The research suggested a number of strategies that might improve integration prospects for Gateway groups, and these are outlined in the 'Key Implications for decision makers' at the start of this report.

## **Knowledge gaps**

Longer-term follow-up of Gateway groups (perhaps to the five-year point, at which people could be eligible for citizenship) might provide valuable, and definitive, information about integration prospects and processes.

The research included a relatively small sub-set of all the Gateway groups. There are likely to be new things to learn about integration of culturally distinct Gateway groups (e.g. Burmese groups) and groups resettled in different regions of the UK (e.g. Brighton, Norwich, Scotland).

This report focuses almost exclusively on information gathered from the Gateway refugees themselves. Information from Gateway service provider and Home Office perspectives could provide a useful additional source of suggestions for improvements in policy and practice.

Finally, reliable data about refugees' pre-UK educational and employment backgrounds, English language skills on arrival and at the end of the 12-month support period were lacking. Systematic collection of this information could be built into Gateway delivery procedures.

## Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the participation of the resettled refugees themselves.

Thanks are also due to the lead agencies (Refugee Council, Refugee Action, Rochdale Borough Council Asylum Team), their caseworkers and delivery partners for providing information; facilitating meetings with the refugees; and, in some cases, being interviewed.

Since 2004, many IRS researchers have contributed to the work underlying this report. Particular contributions were made by the following: Verity Gelsthorpe, Ben Nicholson, Mark McConaghy, Sirkka Komulainen, Carin Soderberg and Eleanor Simmons. Sirkka Komulainen analysed and reported on the qualitative interviews in Bolton at six months. Carin Soderberg wrote an initial report on the research in Bolton at 18 months.

Researchers from The National Centre for Social Research (Matthew Barnard, Sarah Dickens, Robin Legard and Kandy Woodfield) undertook much of the interviewing and all of the analysis of the qualitative data for Sheffield, and prepared draft reports on this.

Independent research consultant Nathalie Walsh carried out research with service providers in Hull and Rochdale, some of which informs this report.

The following UK Border Agency<sup>10</sup> policy colleagues helped by providing ongoing information and comment: Catriona Laing, Kevin Finch, Helen Smith, and Anna Marie Trimblett.

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<sup>10</sup> During the period of the research, and until April 2007, the UK Border Agency was called the 'Immigration and Nationality Directorate' (IND).

## Appendix I Details of the Gateway Protection Programme

The Gateway Protection Programme began in 2004 with an initial target to resettle up to 500 refugees a year. These are refugees identified by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees as especially vulnerable and having no prospects of returning to their country of origin or integrating locally in their country of current refuge. Refugees are interviewed by Home Office staff and the final decision rests with the Home Office. The selected refugees arrive in the UK in groups of around 60 people at a time. The groups usually comprise people from one country of origin, often from the same refugee camp. Most have been of African origin, and the majority of these have fled from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Most groups have been resettled in towns and cities in the north of England. Recently, however, groups have arrived in the south east of England and further resettlement of groups in Scotland is planned.

### Overview of the resettlement process<sup>11</sup>

Refugees are put forward for resettlement by UNHCR and they cannot choose in which country to be resettled. Those who are put forward for UK resettlement are interviewed by the Home Office, in their country of asylum. They may then wait for several months for a decision to be made. If they are accepted by the Home Office for the Gateway Programme they wait again for a departure date. They may know of their departure date less than two months before they finally leave for the UK.

Before coming to the UK, refugees are given cultural orientation by the International Organisation for Migration, on behalf of the Home Office. This includes familiarisation with UK culture, climate, geography, politics, financial management, housing, employment, rights and responsibilities, etc. They may also have some English language training.

Once in the UK they are granted permanent residency and given an official immigration status document. They then enter a specialised 12-month programme of support for integration into their new lives in the UK. They spend around three days in a hotel near their point of arrival where they are welcomed and given further orientation training by the Refugee Arrivals Project or Migrant Helpline. They are provided with basic clothing and toiletries and a small amount of spending money. Before being transferred to the resettlement area they are provided with an amount of money commensurate with two weeks Jobseeker's Allowance to support them until state benefit claims can be processed.

They are then taken to their resettlement area where they are received by the organisation appointed by the Home Office as the lead agency in that area.

### The role of the lead agency

For the first two years of Gateway, the lead agency role was almost exclusively filled by either Refugee Action or the Refugee Council. More recently, local authority asylum teams have also started taking on this role.

The lead agency co-ordinates and facilitates access to housing and services, and provides caseworker support for a 12-month period. Any organisation appointed by the Home Office as the lead agency for a Gateway resettlement area is guided by the terms of its Home Office grant agreement. Beyond this there is flexibility about how the lead agency works to meet its objectives. The partnerships, networks, and approaches to Gateway Protection Programme delivery vary between lead agencies, between resettlement areas, between resettled groups, and over time.

The broad remit of the Gateway Protection Programme lead agency is to:

- provide accommodation in family homes where people can remain settled for at least 12 months;
- provide for refugees' immediate needs (e.g. food, basic domestic equipment and furnishings, medical care) on arrival in the area;

<sup>11</sup> Some procedures have changed since the time the research refers to.



- provide practical orientation on arrival (e.g. to enable refugees to live safely and in accordance with UK law in their homes and in the resettlement area);
- assess individual families' needs and plan tailored casework support for the 12-month Gateway Protection Programme support period, including exit strategies (ensuring those who are still in need of significant levels of support after 12 months are referred to organisations able to provide the support);
- provide casework support for the 12-month Gateway Protection Programme period, including:
  - orientation to promote integration into life in the resettlement area and the UK in general;
  - helping refugees obtain Home Office ID and National Insurance numbers;
  - helping refugees to access mainstream services (such as the NHS and education);
  - helping refugees to access special services (such as specialist mental health treatment, ESOL classes);
  - signposting and referral of refugees to other agencies; and
  - implementation of exit strategies.

Services can be provided through a combination of office-based appointments and drop-in sessions, outreach surgeries, and home visits as appropriate. The lead agency is expected to work in partnership with other organisations to fulfil its remit.

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## Appendix 2 Details of research method

Selection of the groups for inclusion in the IRS research was determined by a combination of pragmatic and methodological considerations. The first two groups resettled, in Sheffield and then Bolton, under the Gateway Protection Programme in 2004, were included in order to provide rapid feedback on the operation of the new resettlement process. The Hull and Rochdale groups were included because they presented the first opportunity to compare integration of one group of refugees split between two resettlement sites under the care of two different types of lead agency, one a voluntary sector organisation and the other a local authority team. The fact that these groups arrived in 2006, as the Gateway Protection Programme was becoming well established, also offered the opportunity for comparison of early and later groups. It provides some indication of how the programme has developed and overcome some of the difficulties of the early days. Oral or written briefings were supplied to policy colleagues soon after each wave of research.

### Sheffield

#### *Participants*

The Sheffield group was the first group resettled under the Gateway Protection Programme. The group comprised 69 people of whom 35 were adults. Two of the adults were from the DRC, 33 were Liberian. All had come to the UK after periods, sometimes over ten years, spent in refugee camps in West Africa. Life in the refugee camps was reported by the International Asylum Policy Unit<sup>12</sup> to be characterised by instability, fear and limited material resources. Food and clothing were scarce and access to medical treatment was severely restricted, which meant there were problems with poor health and malnutrition.

The refugees varied in their fluency in English, literacy, numeracy, previous educational or work experiences and the personal circumstances that had led to their refugee status. There were limited employment opportunities in the refugee camps (including collecting and selling wood, voluntary or paid work for the organisations running the camps or for voluntary groups) and limited work in the local area outside the camps. Those who had worked for camp organisations tended to be older refugees with foreign language and literacy skills, which they had gained through previous education or employment in their countries of origin. There were opportunities to gain basic skills, including literacy skills, in some of the camps.

All 35 adults (23 women and 12 men) in the group were invited to participate in the research and agreed to do so. Although their ages ranged from 16 to 41 years, only two adults were aged over 35 years, and around half (17) were aged under 19 years.

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<sup>12</sup> The International Asylum Policy Unit is now the Refugee Resettlement Programmes Unit.

**Table A1 Characteristics of the groups**

|                    |  | Sheffield (at 6 months) | Bolton (at 18 months) | Hull (at 10 months) | Rochdale (at 10 months) |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| All                |  | 35                      | 44                    | 23                  | 27                      |
| Nationality        | Liberian   | 33                      | 32                    | 0                   | 0                       |
|                    | D.R. Congolese   | 2                       | 12                    | 23                  | 27                      |
| Gender             | Male   | 12                      | 14                    | 12                  | 15                      |
|                    | Female   | 23                      | 30                    | 11                  | 12                      |
| Age                | 16 – 18  | 8                       | 5                     | 1                   | 0                       |
|                    | 19 – 25  | 9                       | 10                    | 2                   | 4                       |
|                    | 26 – 35  | 16                      | 14                    | 9                   | 14                      |
|                    | 36 – 45  | 2                       | 11                    | 11                  | 7                       |
|                    | 46+  | 0                       | 4                     | 0                   | 2                       |
| Family composition | Single* – no relatives in UK and living alone                          | 5                       | 4                     | 0                   | 1                       |
|                    | Single* – living alone   | 0                       | 2                     | 1                   | 2                       |
|                    | Single* – living with dependents                                       | 10                      | 16                    | 3                   | 0                       |
|                    | Single* – living with non-dependent relatives (e.g. parents, siblings) | 8                       | 12                    | 3                   | 0                       |
|                    | Married – living with dependents                                       | 12                      | 10                    | 16                  | 20                      |
|                    | Married – no other relatives in UK                                     | 0                       | 0                     | 0                   | 4                       |

\* Single denotes not living with someone as part of a cohabiting couple in the UK (includes divorced, widowed, separated in UK, and partner alive but not in UK).

Around one-third (12) of the group were living as married couples with dependent children. Among the 23 single people there were: ten single women with dependent children; eight young ( $\leq 20$  years of age) single people living with parents, guardians or other relatives; and five people resettled alone with no relatives in the UK.

By the 18-month interview one man had separated from his wife and children.

### Procedure

Data were collected from the Sheffield group, through face-to-face interviews, at around one month, six months, and eighteen months after arrival in the UK. IRS researchers met the refugees soon after they had arrived in the UK and provided information about the research. Prior to each wave of data collection, refugees were contacted in writing and by telephone and invited to participate. These communications were in English (those who could not read/speak English asked friends or other contacts for help, and this worked in terms of participants attending for interview as scheduled).

Interviews were all held in venues in the centre of Sheffield and lasted for up to 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted by researchers from either IRS or the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and, (with permission, which none of the refugees withheld), were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. An interpreter was provided for refugees with limited English.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather qualitative information about refugees' experiences of resettlement. They were exploratory and interactive in form, so that the questioning could be responsive to participants' contributions. While there were no prescriptive interview schedules, interviewers used topic guides, developed through collaboration between IRS and NatCen. The topic guides were informed by the Ager and Strang (2004) work on Indicators of Integration and outlined key subject areas to be discussed. Prior to the second and third waves of interviewing, interviewers read through transcripts of previous interviews and summarised key points to further inform their subsequent interviewing.

### **Analysis and interpretation**

Interviews were transcribed from tape and then systematically analysed using a qualitative analysis tool, developed by NatCen. This tool facilitates the classification of data against themes, and the review of themes across the group and of individual contributions to a theme in their original context.

The themes used to structure the analysis were drawn directly from the accounts of the refugees themselves, rather than being a priori concepts applied to the data. Themes were developed and coding consistency checked, collaboratively by the research team.

Where information is presented about the group in Sheffield it is largely drawn from reports on the data drafted by NatCen.

## **Bolton**

### **Participants**

The group of 81 people (44 adults and 37 children) arrived in the UK in autumn 2004 as the first group to be resettled in Bolton and only the second ever Gateway group. Of the 44 adults in the group, 32 were Liberians resettled from Sierra Leone and 12 were Congolese (from DRC) resettled from Uganda. Prior to coming to the UK, most of the Liberians had lived in disused and burnt-out buildings in Freetown (the Sierra Leone capital) with few having come from refugee camps. The Congolese came from one highly organised, and comparatively well resourced, refugee camp. Education prior to UK arrival varied across the two groups, with a few people having had virtually no education and a few having obtained university level qualifications. There were indications that the Congolese group were better educated than their Liberian counterparts.

Most of the Liberian adults survived in Sierra Leone by petty trading or washing clothes for others at subsistence level. A few taught themselves trades or services (hairdressing, tie-dye/batik making, and babysitting) but had no formal training or qualifications. Of the few with professional qualifications or experience in skilled jobs in Liberia, none had been able to follow these in Sierra Leone.

All the Congolese had come from an urban existence and had been working or studying prior to fleeing to Uganda. Some had several years of work experience in occupations including tailoring, teaching and working as a civil servant. Only tailors had been able to continue their work in Uganda. The remainder had worked as peasant farmers growing their own food in their plots in the refugee camp.

All 44 adults were invited to participate in the research. Forty-three participated in the first wave of research, at six months after resettlement and all 44 participated in the second wave of research, at 18 months after resettlement. The interview participants were 30 women (7 Congolese and 23 Liberian) and 14 men (5 Congolese and 9 Liberian). Participants were aged between 16 and 46 years, with around one-third (15) of the group aged over 35 years, and around one-tenth (5) aged under 19 years. As a group, the Liberians interviewed were younger than the Congolese: almost two-thirds (20) compared with one-third (4) were aged under 31 years.

By the 18-month interview there had been five births, one marital separation, and one young man had left his family to live alone. The group (of, by now, 86 people) were living as 29 households. In terms of marital status, the majority of the group (34 respondents) were single, or living as single in the UK. Seven of the 'single' people reported that they had a partner who was not in the UK. Two of the 'single' people were divorced and three were widowed.

The 'single' people comprised several distinct groups. There were 14 women and two men living with dependent children; seven young men and women living with parents or guardians; five young men and women living with siblings; and the six people who lived alone (four of whom had no relatives in the UK).

Ten people were married, and all five couples had children. Most (eight) of the 12 Congolese arrived as part of a married couple with children. Almost all (30) of the 32 Liberians were single or living as single.

## **Procedure**

In Bolton the first wave of data collection was at six months after resettlement, rather than one month, because the Sheffield work had indicated problems in attempting to gather detailed information from the refugees so soon after resettlement. Culture shock, confusion and language difficulties contributed to a paucity of information gathered in many cases.

The first wave of data collection in Bolton, at six months, was conducted using virtually the same procedure as that used in Sheffield at all three waves. Briefly, it consisted of in-depth interviews carried out by researchers from IRS and NatCen. Potential participants were contacted in writing with follow-up by telephone to make appointments for interview. The letter was accompanied by an information leaflet explaining the purpose and method of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality issues. This preliminary written and telephone communication was in English (those who could not read/speak English asked friends or other contacts for help and this worked in terms of participants attending for interview as scheduled). Additionally, informal information sessions were held in Bolton to enable participants to meet the interviewers and find out more before deciding whether or not to participate. Interviews were held in a central location in Bolton with interpretation provided if requested by refugees. With participants' permission (which was never withheld), interviews were tape recorded.

The second wave of data collection in Bolton, at 18 months after arrival in the UK, was through face-to-face interviews guided by questionnaires. These were designed to ensure systematic gathering of quantitative information in addition to some more qualitative data. The areas covered were largely drawn from the topic guide used at the 18-month interviews in Sheffield (housing and local community, employment, education, healthcare, social networks, family reunion, and the impact of the cessation of caseworker support). Where possible, questions were drawn from a pool of questions being developed for a larger-scale IRS survey of refugees. Only limited piloting of the questionnaire was possible. It was tested individually with three refugees, and through a group discussion with four interpreters (two Krio and two Swahili speakers).

The 43 people interviewed at six months, plus one person unavailable at that wave, were contacted in writing and by telephone. Details of the research process were given, people invited to participate, and appointments made with participants. Interviews were scheduled to last for between one and two hours.

The location and other arrangements for interviewing were very similar to those at six months. Interviews were held at a central location in Bolton (except for one with a person who had moved to London and two with couples in Bolton, all of whom were interviewed at home). They were conducted one-to-one, with an interpreter present if the interviewee requested. If interviewees agreed (and this was the case for every interview), the interviews were taped.

Three questionnaires were used to guide the interviews: one covering individual activities (such as education, employment, and social activities); one about the home and local area; and one about any dependent children who were not interviewed in their own right. Each questionnaire contained both closed and open questions. Each interviewee completed an 'individual' questionnaire, one interviewee per household completed a 'home' questionnaire, and one interviewee per household completed a 'child' questionnaire.

Before the interviews, interviewers read through transcripts of the six-month interviews and annotated the 18-month questionnaires to inform their questioning. Interviewers recorded responses to questions on the interview schedules by coding responses to closed questions and making notes about responses to open questions. These notes were reviewed with the aid of the tape recordings, but the tapes were not transcribed.

## **Analysis**

The six-month interviews were transcribed from tape. IRS analysed the data by coding the interview data with an appropriate qualitative data analysis software package (NVivo) and retrieving key categories by drawing on the Ager and Strang (2004) Indicators of Integration framework and previous research on Gateway refugees. This standard procedure for qualitative data analysis was used in order to produce a systematic overview of the data.

Data from the 18-month interviews were stored and analysed using a statistical software package.

## Hull and Rochdale

Identical methodology was used in Hull and in Rochdale.

### **Participants**

The Hull and Rochdale refugees were all originally from DRC and all were brought to the UK in spring 2006 from a refugee camp in Zambia where they had been living for between three and seven years. Nearly all were survivors of violence and torture, with no hope or desire to return to DRC and little hope of integrating in Zambia. In Hull, the group comprised a total of 23 adults and 36 children from 11 families. In Rochdale there were 13 families, comprising 27 adults and 27 children.

Some of the group had lived in towns in DRC but others were from rural backgrounds with limited or no experience of urban life of any kind. Levels of education among the adults varied. Most were literate in Swahili, and some in French. Many had worked in a voluntary capacity in the refugee camp and a few had found paid work there. Children had attended school in the camps, and a few adults had studied vocational courses (such as sewing, fishing or baking) or English.

Before coming to the UK, around three-quarters of the refugees in both areas had been in paid work at some point. Self-reports indicated that those resettled in Hull were more likely than those in Rochdale to have been working in what might be considered 'professional occupations'. Almost half of the Hull group, compared with about one-quarter of the Rochdale group, had worked as teachers or nurses, or similar, before coming to the UK. A few in each group had worked as vendors or traders, or as social workers in the refugee camp. Others had trades like sewing, plumbing, baking or hairdressing.

All 23 adults (aged 17 years or over) resettled in Hull, and all 27 adults resettled in Rochdale, in spring of 2006, participated in the research.

The Hull participants comprised 11 women and 12 men. Participants were aged between 17 and 41 years; almost half of the group (11) were aged over 35 years and only one person was under 19 years of age. The 12 households included: eight couples with between one and four dependent children; two single mothers with dependents (one separated from her husband in the UK, and one widowed before arrival); one single father with dependents (widowed since arriving in the UK); and one father living alone since separation from his wife and children in the UK. Three of the interviewees were young, single adults living with parents or guardians.

The Rochdale participants comprised 12 women and 15 men. Participants were aged between 22 and 59 years; around one-third (9) of the group were aged over 35 years. The 15 households included: ten couples with between one and four dependent children; two couples with no children; and three single people with no dependents.

### **Procedure**

There was just one wave of data collection in Hull and Rochdale; at 10 to 11 months after arrival in the UK. Primarily quantitative data were gathered from the refugees using self-completion questionnaires.

Contact details were supplied by the lead agencies. Letters, in English and Swahili (the first language of many of the group), were sent inviting people to attend a meeting at which they would learn more about the research and, if they were willing, complete a questionnaire about their lives in the UK.

Data collection was undertaken in the context of group meetings at a venue in the resettlement area. Most information was gathered through the self-completion questionnaires (available in either English or Swahili) composed primarily of closed questions. Additional qualitative information was gathered through refugees' written responses to open questions included in the questionnaires and through notes of conversations with refugees over the course of the meeting.

The self-completion questionnaires covered themes arising in the earlier work in Sheffield and Bolton. Where possible, questions were taken from the questionnaires used for the IRS evaluation of the Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services (SUNRISE) scheme. These had already been piloted and tested.

Professional French and DRC Swahili interpreters attended the meetings to assist with questionnaire completion and any other interpretation as required. Refugees were encouraged to ask for as much help as they needed and interpreters were advised that some refugees might need help with the entire questionnaire. Around one-quarter of the refugees in each area completed the questionnaire in English.

### **Analysis**

Questionnaire responses in Swahili were translated into English by one of the interpreters who had assisted with the meetings. Questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS statistical software. In some cases, gaps in completion in one section were back-filled during data cleaning by reference to responses in another section, e.g. questions on economic activity since arrival were cross-referenced with responses to sections on education and employment. Frequency tables and cross-tabulations were produced to aid interpretation of the information gathered.

One Rochdale refugee did not complete the questionnaire. Item non-response ranged between zero and three in Hull and zero and six in Rochdale. So, reporting is generally based on responses of 23 people in Hull and 26 people in Rochdale.

### **Data storage and protection**

Data were handled in accordance with the requirements of the data protection act. Hard copy questionnaires and transcripts, and audio cassette tapes with interviews were stored securely. Hard copy transcripts and cassette tapes were destroyed securely once information had been extracted for analysis.

Electronic data files were anonymised or password protected, in addition to being held on a secure network.

### **Ethical considerations**

The Gateway refugees were approached as a vulnerable group. They had experience of great trauma prior to arriving in the UK, were dealing with the challenges of adjusting to new lives, and were relatively socio-economically deprived. Some had limited experience of education and a few were not literate in any language. They had a special relationship with the Home Office, generally viewing it as their protector and benefactor. These characteristics were born in mind in the design and execution of the data collection with this group.

The research focused on the practical, rather than emotional, aspects of the refugees' lives in the UK, and did not actively explore experiences before resettlement. This reflected both the aims of the research and the desire not to prompt refugees into focusing on issues more likely to cause upset. Some refugees of course chose to talk about issues that they, and sometimes the researchers, found upsetting. All researchers were briefed about the refugee group they would be working with and given guidance on handling difficult situations. Those working on the long, one-to-one interviews in Sheffield and Bolton were given training on interviewing vulnerable adults. Debriefing processes were built into the fieldwork plans to address the possible emotional impact on the interviewers.

Efforts were made at the meetings to:

- make the process as relaxed, comfortable and informal as possible;
- respect refugees' preferences for gender of interpreter;
- provide information about the research so that consent was informed;
- explain clearly the process for maintaining confidentiality of any information provided;
- emphasise that participation was voluntary and had no impact on their immigration status or any other aspect of their life in the UK;
- emphasise the independence of the research team from other parts of the Home Office;
- provide all necessary support to enable every person to participate as fully as they wished;
- allow everyone who wished to have their say;
- ensure refugees were not financially disadvantaged by their participation;
- ensure accessibility of research venues for disabled refugees;
- care for attendant children; and
- ensure that refugees kept any appointments coinciding with the meeting time.

Where interviews were recorded, this was done with participant permission and on the understanding that the recordings would be destroyed once the relevant information had been extracted.

At the end of the meeting, refugees were provided with contact details for a range of organisations offering different types of support and information.

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## **Appendix 3 Discussion of between-groups comparison of participant characteristics**

The Hull and Rochdale groups were exclusively from the DRC, compared with around one-quarter (12) of the Bolton group and just two of the Sheffield group. A key impact of this on differential integration rates in the four areas may be through differences in English language skills between Congolese and Liberian refugees. Liberians generally arrived speaking English or languages heavily influenced by English. The Congolese group arrived speaking Swahili, other African languages, and French.

Country of origin of the groups may also have impact through the educational and employment experiences of the people both in their country of origin and in the country or camps where they initially sought refuge. Information was limited but the Sheffield group may have been less highly educated than the Bolton group. The level of education among the Rochdale group may have been higher again, with around one-quarter of the group reporting having worked in professional occupations (such as teaching and nursing) before coming to the UK. The Hull group appeared to be the most highly qualified; half the group reported having worked in professional occupations before coming to the UK.

Other impacts associated with country of origin, which may be more difficult to measure, include: dissimilarity to the UK in terms of cultural practices and legal frameworks; nature of persecution people have been exposed to; physical and mental wellbeing resultant from conditions before and after fleeing; pre-arrival exposure to urban, technologically complex, life; length of time living as a refugee and the nature of that refugee existence (e.g. relative dependence or independence).

The Sheffield group were by far the youngest group and the Hull group the oldest. Younger refugees might be expected to integrate more readily, being more easily able to access education and training and perhaps more rapidly employable than their older counterparts. On the other hand, older refugees might bring qualifications and occupational experience that might be facilitative. In Sheffield and Bolton around one-quarter of each group were young, single, childless people living with parents or guardians or other extended family.

Being resettled with family might have positive and negative impacts on integration, depending upon the family structure, the individual's place in that structure, and quality of relationships within the family. Arriving in the UK completely alone might be anticipated to be disadvantageous in terms of access to social support. In Hull and Rochdale, where all the refugees were from DRC, almost all participants were living as part of a family, and most were part of a couple with dependent children. In contrast, in Sheffield and in Bolton the majority of participants were single, and many of these were single women with dependent children. In both of these areas there were also a number of people who were completely alone in the UK. Most of the Congolese group, however, in both Sheffield and in Bolton were living as part of a married couple with dependent children.

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## Appendix 4 Details of UK employment for each group

At one month after resettlement, no one in Sheffield was in paid work or volunteering; by 18 months, one-quarter of the group were in paid employment, but little information about this is available. In Bolton at six months, only one person was in paid employment. At 18 months in Bolton, two-thirds of women and around four-fifths of men were looking for work. Half of these, one-third of women and around two-fifths of men (one-third of the group overall) had been in paid employment at some point since arriving in the UK. Less encouragingly, only one-tenth of the group were in paid work at the time of interview.

Among those (two men and three women) employed in Bolton at 18 months, only two had a permanent job, both in the food preparation industry and only one of these was full-time. Two of the group were students working part-time while studying, one as a teacher and one as a hairdresser.

In Bolton at 18 months, of the women who had ever had paid work in the UK, all were single, all but one were Liberian, and most had dependent children. Most had worked in low-skilled occupations, some working part-time and others full-time. Four had done cleaning and others had worked in food preparation, hairdressing, factory work, shop work, care work, and in one case reception work. All but one had also studied in the preceding 12 months and most hoped to study further.

All the Bolton men who had ever had paid work in the UK were single, without dependent children. Most had done factory or warehouse work, or worked in the food preparation industry. One, who was working full-time, said his post was permanent and that he had obtained it through an employment agency having initially worked in a temporary position. One had been working part-time in a permanent teaching post while studying for his degree. All had been studying in the preceding 12 months and most hoped to study further.

Although paid employment rates for men appeared better in Hull than in Bolton, and outstanding in Rochdale compared to all other areas, here too paid employment was in the unskilled, low-paid, temporary sectors. At ten months, in Hull, one-quarter of the men reported having had paid work experience in the UK; only one of these was employed at the time of the research. In Rochdale, almost three-quarters of the men said that they had done paid work in the UK; at the time of the research just under half of the men were in paid work. In both Hull and Rochdale, all paid work was unskilled factory or warehouse work. Most men had worked full-time but work was temporary and discontinuous in nature and could involve shift work. Refugee comments suggested that pay was at the minimum wage level.

Although one-third of the women in Hull and two-thirds of the women in Rochdale said they were looking for work, at ten months, none of the women in either group had done any paid work.