

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 2, Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Shaping refugee integration policy and practice globally		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2001- ongoing		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Alison Strang	Senior Research Fellow	2000-present
Alastair Ager	Director	1992-2004; 2015-present
Oonagh O'Brien	Lecturer	2001-present
Arek Dakessian	Research Fellow	2019-present
Leyla Kerlaff	Research Fellow	2019-present
Helen Baillot	Research Fellow	2015-2016; 2019-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013 -present		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Understandings of the integration of migrants have been heavily contested leading to lack of coherence in provision for refugees. Our initial work developing the 'Indicators of Integration' framework (over 500 citations) shaped debate on refugee integration, bringing increased focus on social connection and its impact on access to rights and services. Our continuing policy, practice, and community focused research work now underpins UK and Scottish Government refugee integration policy, has influenced the design of major refugee support programmes and policy globally (including in the UK, Australia and USA), and informs mapping of connectedness and trust in diverse migration settings.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>In 2001, UK Home Office commissioned a Queen Margaret University (QMU) team led by <i>Ager</i> to identify indicators of effective integration for refugees. The research included reviews of academic, policy and practice literature and quantitative and qualitative data collection involving refugees and host communities. <i>Strang</i> led the literature review, field research and analysis. Data from primary and secondary sources were distilled to identify ten core domains of refugee integration. The Indicators of Integration (IoI) framework specified these as: 'Markers and means' (employment, housing, education, health); 'Social connections' (bridges, bonds, links); 'Facilitators' (language and cultural knowledge, safety and security); and the 'Foundations' (of rights and citizenship). UK Home Office Working Papers were published in 2004, and academic papers in 2008 and 2010. The research broke new ground in providing a holistic model of refugee integration drawing on multiple perspectives and emphasising the interdependence of the domains, and elaborating the distinct types of social connection and their contribution to integration.</p> <p>From 2009-2013 Strang served on the steering group for a Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) longitudinal study of new refugees' integration experiences, based on the Ager &amp; Strang IoI framework. On the basis of this evidence, the Holistic Integration Service, (funded by the Big Lottery) was launched in 2013, and continues (funded by the EU/Home Office). The programme used the 'IoI' framework to shape service provision for new refugees. Strang led a QMU/SRC research team to examine refugee integration pathways using the client database (recording experiences in each IoI domain); focus group discussions and interviews with beneficiaries; engagement with a front-line practitioner Community of Practice; and policy stakeholder</p>		

interviews. Key findings demonstrated: significant delays in welfare benefits payments; the detrimental effects of housing policy on language acquisition, education and the development of social networks. Clear evidence emerged of the importance of beginner level language support across all domains of integration, and challenges in finding employment – especially commensurate with refugees' pre-migration educational/skill levels (Strang et al. 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017)

Identifying a gap in research tools, Strang designed a participatory approach to mapping social connections and tested this in refugee resettlement and humanitarian contexts. The tool measures connectedness (the mobilisation of networks), trust and reciprocity across contrasting cultural contexts. The approach has been used to research patterns of social connection and access to services in resettlement contexts (Strang & Quinn, 2019). A study amongst displaced Iraqis revealed disparities between resources available to different members of the population affected by the conflict (men/women, displaced/left behind) for meeting basic needs, resolving community disputes and addressing domestic violence (Strang et al., 2020).

The social connections tool is currently being deployed in studies addressing health in contexts of fragility (through the NIHR RUHF Global Health Research Unit); refugee family reunion and integration (EU Asylum and Migration Integration Fund - AMIF); access to health in protracted displacement (GCRF in collaboration with University of Edinburgh), social networks and integration of refugees in Scotland (AMIF); and impacts of COVID restrictions on refugees and asylum seekers (Scottish Government & Scottish Funding Council).

### 3. References to the research

**Ager, A., and Strang, A.** 2008. Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166-191. <https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/21/2/166/1621262>. *Based upon triangulation of policy analysis, survey data and participatory fieldwork in diverse settings of refugee settlement, this paper (501 WoS citations; 1700+ Google scholar citations) - has been key point of reference for conceptual analysis and practice and policy development in the field of refugee integration over the last decade.*

**Strang, A., and Ager, A.** 2010. Refugee integration: Emerging trends and remaining agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 589-607. <https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article-abstract/23/4/589/1532136> *A rigorous analytic review concluding a special issue on critical reflections on refugee integration which identifies key priority research questions on the basis of a synthesis of existing knowledge. (142 Web of Science citations).*

**Strang, A., Baillot, H. and Mignard, E., 2016.** *Rights, Resilience and Refugee Integration In Scotland.* Scottish Refugee Council. [https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Full\\_Integration\\_Report\\_June\\_2016.pdf](https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Full_Integration_Report_June_2016.pdf) *A comprehensive report of findings from collaborative research led by Strang 2013-2016 documenting refugees' integration experiences, which informed SRC and partners' service delivery design and that of a broad range of others through New Scots policy networks and SRC dissemination activities.*

**Strang, A., Baillot, A H., and Mignard, E., 2017.** "I don't want to depend on others... I want to participate." Transition experiences of new refugees in Glasgow, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1341717> *Analysis based on rigorous survey of over 1800 households, complemented by interview and focus group discussions with refugees and service providers across Scotland. Submitted as [0H/02/02]*

**Strang, A. and Quinn, N. 2019.** Integration or Isolation? Refugees' Social Connections and Wellbeing, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, fez040, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez040> *Deployed innovative participatory social mapping methodology with Iranian and Afghani refugee communities to identify relevance of different forms of social capital to supporting mental health and wellbeing, informing both practice and theory.*

**Strang, A., O'Brien, O., Sandilands, M. and Horn, R., 2020.** Help-seeking, trust and intimate partner violence: social connections amongst displaced and non-displaced Yezidi women and men in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. *Conflict and Health*, 14(1), pp.1-12.  
<https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-020-00305-w> *Deployed further iteration of social connections mapping with Yezedi populations in northern Iraq to identify pathways of help-seeking and trust, with findings informing humanitarian assistance strategies regarding intimate-partner violence and more broadly. Submitted as [0H/02/02]*

#### 4. Details of the impact

##### National policy

The lol framework shapes current UK integration and social cohesion policy. In 2019 the Home Office (HO) and Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government launched a refreshed lol framework (and toolkit) [1 & 2] with respect to which HO-funded refugee integration projects are expected to demonstrate their impact. Strang co-authored this framework, incorporating new research insights. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM UK) delivered HO-funded training on the toolkit (2019-2020) for Local Authorities and key stakeholders nationwide [3]. Specifications for the evaluation of the HO resettlement scheme and for a new 'Refugee Transitions' fund both reflect lol domains. The latter responds to research by Strang (2016; 2017) and others demonstrating the need for long-term support for refugee 'transition' to effective participation.

The 'New Scots' Refugee Integration Strategy [4] uses lol as its underpinning framework and embeds lol principles. Strang chaired strategy development and implementation 2012 to 2018 [4], drawing on her research. Phase 2, 2018 – 2021 continues the lol holistic approach, support from arrival and the involvement of communities. IGHD research briefings (Strang et al., 2014, 2015, 2016; 2017) regularly informed the strategy.

During the *All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration Inquiry into Integration* the Consortium of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) noted the effectiveness of the New Scots lol-based structure for multi sector response (APPG Interim Report 2017). Integration policy in Wales and N. Ireland also reflects this. Strang represented 'New Scots' in the Scottish 'Refugee Taskforce' convened in 2015/6 which led to new cross-sector partnerships for resettling refugees.

##### National practice

Following the 2004 publication, Scottish Refugee Council (SRC), shifted focus to prioritise establishing 'Integration Networks' building 'bridges' between refugees and local people. 'New Scots' continues to provide impetus for cross-sectoral investment in community cohesion (Scottish Community Development Centre, 2018). Research on the Holistic Integration Service (HIS: 2013-16), led to improvements in statutory agencies' practice: e.g. 'Client Journey' to process refugee benefit claims; shared understanding between partners (British Red Cross, Workers' Educational Association, Glasgow Clyde College), and the development of new interventions e.g. the [Family Keyword Service](#). SRC consistently uses the lol framework and HIS research as a basis for securing funds, service provision, training, policy engagement and public awareness raising [5]. As a result, refugees and local communities benefit from increased access to health services, employment, welfare and education; and improved social connections and social cohesion.

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde commissioned Strang to employ social connections mapping to investigate social isolation and mental health amongst refugee men. Dissemination with policymakers and practitioners led to a pilot intervention, '[Peer Education for Health](#)', later extended across Glasgow and shared in practitioner forums in UK, Europe and Australia. Scottish Government and AMIF have implemented the research implications by funding the Sharing lives, Sharing Languages' programme to build social bridges through shared activity. [5].

In 2018, British Red Cross received funding to support the integration of approximately 800 reuniting refugee families. The service provides casework based on Iol, and interventions using the Iol lenses of 'bonds' and 'bridges'. BRC and SRC are currently embedding the IGHD social connections mapping tool in case work to enhance caseworker practice and inform project planning [5 & 6].

### Practice internationally

Large-scale examples of refugee support programmes informed by Iol include: Foundation House, Victoria; STARTTS, New South Wales, Australia; RISE, Colorado, USA [8], and the 'Finland-My Home' programme. UNHCR and World Bank [10] reference the research in examining approaches to refugee integration support.

Research using the social connections tool (Strang et al. 2020) enabled practice partners in Iraq to develop more locally sensitive humanitarian programming harnessing locally trusted resources and shaped the practice of organizations supporting refugees and other vulnerable populations [7].

### International policy

The research has had particular influence on policy in Australia, as evidenced by the National Youth Settlement Framework 2020, where the Iol framework was a catalyst to bring together diverse principles of good practice into a rights based policy [8]. The Iol framework and research on social connections also helped shape the UN's IOM DISC (Diversity, Inclusion & Social Cohesion) global strategy [3]. Research (based on Iol) in the USA has led to enhanced rights for refugee integration support in the state of Colorado [9].

Broader influence is evidenced by international research papers reporting research on refugee integration using the work, invitations to present the research at international forums, (Finland, Russia, Australia & New Zealand, Japan, South Korea), and to contribute to policy consultations (EC, ECRE, NATO) along with direct enquiries from researchers and policymakers.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework 2019.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019>
2. TESTIMONIAL: Director for Migration and Border Analysis, Home Office Analysis and Insight.
3. TESTIMONIAL: Chief of Mission IOM UK
4. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT, 2017. *New Scots. Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities. Final Report*. Available from:  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00515713.pdf>
5. TESTIMONIAL: CEO, Scottish Refugee Council.
6. TESTIMONIAL: Head of Refugee Support (West), Scotland, Northern Ireland & Isle of Man, British Red Cross.
7. TESTIMONIAL: (Former) Head of the Incubation Hub, Tearfund.
8. TESTIMONIAL: National Manager, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN)
9. TESTIMONIAL: (Former) Colorado State Refugee Coordinator. iNOW Founder and Strategic Partnerships Developer
10. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2013, *A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Europe*. Available from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/522980604.html> [accessed 25 September 2017].