

<b>Institution:</b> University of Greenwich		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 20 - Social Work and Social Policy		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Co-producing user-led actions with community organisations to 'humanise' and improve the confidence and wellbeing of migrant families with no recourse to public funds		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> December 2014 - December 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Tracey Reynolds	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Social Sciences	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 01/12/2014 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> December 2014 - December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Migrants make up 14% of the UK population and face homelessness, financial hardship, and social exclusion due to 'hostile environment' immigration policies. Research led by the University of Greenwich (UoG), co-produced with over 100 migrant women, improved the design, development and delivery of services supporting migrant communities at organisations such as <i>Citizens UK</i>, <i>Creating Ground</i>, <i>Magpie Project</i>, <i>Praxis</i>, <i>RENAISI</i>, <i>Regional Refugee Forum NE</i>, and their collaborative networks. Crucially, the research helped to improve the quality of life, physical and mental health and wellbeing of migrant women, their families and communities. Finally, it influenced national policy debates and empowered migrant women to directly engage with policymakers in the UK Parliament, thus 'humanising' the policy issue. UoG research directly supplied the <i>Runnymede Trust's</i> stated policy position on NRPF, and contributed to the creation of the UK Parliament's <i>All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on No Recourse to Public Funds</i>.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Over 1,000,000 children under 18 in the UK do not have British or Irish citizenship. In 2020, more than 1 in 6 of these children lived in a family expected to have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), a standard condition applied to migrants with a temporary and/or indefinite leave to remain immigration status. NRPF prohibits families accessing mainstream benefits (housing, welfare, medical assistance), or vital support even in a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning British-born children of these migrants live in poverty, and face destitution.</p> <p>Creative participatory methods allow marginalised migrants and their families to engage and communicate their experiences and viewpoints because they do not require fluent English language knowledge. These methods use and generate embodied collective knowledges, allowing migrant families to shape debates on issues directly affecting them. The interconnected projects <b>G1-G3</b> established a participatory framework bringing together practitioners, policymakers and migrant women living with NRPF to raise awareness of the impact of this policy for migrant families. It positioned these women as co-creators of knowledge and provided training and resources in effective civic engagement for this vulnerable community.</p> <p><b>G1</b> explored how mothering practices by migrant women equated to citizenship practice, used by these women to challenge racism and social exclusion in their lived experiences <b>[R4]</b>. This collaborative project, with migrant support organisation <i>RENAISI</i>, used forum theatre as Participatory Action Research (PAR) to co-produce knowledge by migrant women on actively creating new forms of citizenship, through their cultural and caring work, to challenge their marginalised status in society <b>[R3]</b>. Weekly workshops with 20 migrant women over a period of 8 months, enabled these women to construct, enact and negotiate aspects of motherhood and citizenship, often missed by more conventional methodologies researching migrant communities <b>[R1]</b>. A key project finding was that bottom-up rather than top-down approaches are essential for policy research to improve community engagement and participation with marginalised groups.</p> <p><b>G2</b> used participatory methods (walking methods, participatory theatre, photography, film) to generate co-produced new knowledge about NRPF migrant women. Working in partnership with migrant organisation (<i>Praxis</i>), a race equality think tank (<i>Runnymede Trust</i>), and a group of 15 migrant mothers and children over a period of 2 years, the research pioneered groundbreaking scholarship in the use of PAR methods in validating the tacit expert knowledge of marginalised communities in policy and practice debates <b>[R2]</b>. This novel use of arts-based research was then applied to local community collaborative projects (with <i>Creating Ground</i> and <i>Citizens UK</i>) in</p>		

understanding the de-humanising effects of racial discriminatory policies in the UK, such as NRPF immigration policy, thereby advancing policy research on migrant communities [R5].

**G3** extended the theoretical and methodological model from **G2** to third sector organisations' practice to encourage migrants' civic engagement on issues of migrant integration. This 2-year project trained staff in 4 migrant support organisations in London (*Praxis, Creating Ground, Magpie Project, NELMA*) and the North East of England (*Regional Refugee Forum NE*) in using creative participatory methods for civic engagement, which our prior research demonstrated to be effective. It developed impact by extending migrant support organisations' repertoire of effective engagement, often overlooked within public deliberation.

The research supported by **G1-G3** was a collaboration with Erel, Kaptani (The Open University) and O'Neill (Durham University; University College Cork). **Reynolds** drew directly from her expertise in areas of 'race' and social justice, leading on policy development and engagement, including the partnership with *Runnymede Trust*, co-hosting policy events (e.g. policy day with 80 delegates: local councillors, parliamentarians, social workers, teachers, child poverty charities) and developing a policy briefing report [R2] on the policy value of PAR methods for engaging marginalised groups. The research design was equally divided between Erel and **Reynolds**. The whole team contributed to fieldwork, data analysis, and writing up research findings, with **Reynolds** responsible for connecting 'race' and immigration policy, and the adverse effects of racialised policies on community integration. **Reynolds** joined UoG on 1 December 2014, **G1** ran May 2013 - Mar 2015, with underpinning research derived from **G1** being published 2017 onwards.

### 3. References to the research

- R1** Erel, U., **Reynolds, T.** and Kaptani, E. (2017) 'Participatory Theatre for Transformative Social Research', *Qualitative Research*, 17(3): 302-312. DOI 10.1177/1468794117696029, <https://bit.ly/2QstmLK>. [REF2 Submission - Identifier 16381]. Funded by **G1**.
- R2** Erel, U., Kaptani, E., O'Neill, M. and **Reynolds, T.** (2017) *Participatory Action Research: Engaging marginalised communities in policy and practice*. Runnymede Trust Practice Policy Briefing. London: Runnymede Trust. <https://bit.ly/3qxf8UB>. Funded by **G2**.
- R3** Erel, U., **Reynolds, T.** and Kaptani, E. (2018) 'Migrant Mothers' Creative Interventions into Racialised Citizenship', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(1): 55-72. DOI 10.1080/01419870.2017.1317825, <https://bit.ly/3dNcSxy>. [REF2 Submission - Identifier 16382]. Funded by **G1**.
- R4** **Reynolds, T.**, Erel, U. and Kaptani, E. (2018) 'Migrant Mothers: Performing kin work and belonging across private and public boundaries', *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 7(3): 365-382. DOI 10.1332/204674318X15233476441573, <https://bit.ly/32TVZE2>. Funded by **G1**.
- R5** O'Neill, M., Erel, U., Kaptani, E. and **Reynolds, T.** (2019) 'Borders, Risk and Belonging: Challenges for arts-based research in understanding the lives of women asylum seekers and migrants "at the borders of humanity"', *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture*, 10(1): 129-147. DOI 10.1386/cjmc.10.1.129\_1, <https://bit.ly/3gJfilm>. [REF2 Submission - Identifier 22989]. Funded by **G2**.

#### Grants awarded supporting underpinning research:

- G1** Erel, U. (PI), **Reynolds, T.** (CI), *Migrant Mothers Caring for the Future: Creative interventions in making new citizens*, AHRC, May 2013 - Mar 2015, GBP32,517, AH/K00591X/1.
- G2** Erel, U. (PI), **Reynolds, T.** (CI) and O'Neill, M. (CI) *Participatory Arts and Social Action Research (PASAR): Participatory theatre and walking methods' potential for co-producing knowledge*, ESRC/ NCRM, Jan 2016 - Jan 2018, GBP366,662, ES/N012224/1.
- G3** Erel, U. (PI), **Reynolds, T.** (CI), *Participatory Artsbased Methods for Civic Engagement in Migrant Support Organisations*, AHRC, Feb 2020 - Jan 2022 (interrupted due to COVID-19 pandemic), GBP78,382, AH/T004045/1.

### 4. Details of the impact

The direct beneficiaries of UoG's research were migrant women. Families and communities also benefited due to the cascading nature of these impacts. Research also impacted on community organisations, improving the quality and reach of their service delivery, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Uptake of research findings, and active engagement of migrant women in policy discussions, helped shape national policy debate on no recourse to public funds (NRPF),

directly informed the *Runnymede Trust's* policy and strategy, and contributed to the creation of the *All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on No Recourse to Public Funds*.

### **Improved confidence and wellbeing of migrant women and their families**

Underpinning research by the university during the assessment period was coproduced via creative interventions with 105 migrant women across different projects and organisations in London and the NE of England (see Section 2). Engagement with participants took place via weekly workshops on PAR methods, skills, and practices, to directly involve women in local action. These were safe spaces for the women to open up with each other, share difficult stories, and provide psychological and practical support such as the provision of essentials [E1: p1, E5, E6]. Recorded impacts that can be attributed to UoG began to emerge from January 2015 onwards.

**Increased confidence, empowerment, and social inclusion:** Before participating in the research, the women lacked the confidence to participate within their communities and the self-belief that they could effect change to improve their lives or wellbeing. All women (100%) felt more confident and empowered as a direct result of participating in the research [E1: p. 3], *“It’s had a positive impact. It helped me to be ... a lot more confident...have a different perspective of life because we can tell all our stories”* [Tina, E1: p.4]. 92% believed their sense of belonging had improved through participation in community-led solutions; 64% found project participation had helped develop communication skills [E1: p. 3], *“It’s given me the confidence that I can apply my communication skills gained to talk to others going through similar experiences”* [Comfort, E1: p.4]. 88% felt motivated to continue to participate within communities and to mobilise them in local actions that would help improve the lives of their families and wider community [E1: p.3, E2, E5].

**Acquiring new skills and confidence to challenge NRPF policy, and to speak with professionals and policymakers:** Workshop activities provided migrant women with knowledge, skills and tools that empowered them to act as agents of change. Training in collective participation gave 91% confidence in sharing new knowledge of PAR methods and community organising; 84% felt able to share their experiences of NRPF: *“I was reluctant to say anything ... because of my [undocumented] immigration status but since the research I now have confidence ... Now I can approach anyone and feel confident in relating my story in any setting”* [‘Doreen’, E1: p. 4-5]. 82% were empowered to advocate for self and family members affected by NRPF. 80% joined campaigns, networks and alliances to speak out against NRPF, sharing their stories [E1: p. 4-5]. 75% felt capable of speaking to other agencies, organisations and government departments on issues affecting migrant families [E1: p. 4-5], using these new skills to raise public awareness of the ‘hostile environment’ [E1: p. 8-9]. In December 2017, the women gave a performance-based presentation at a policy event hosted by the APPG on Migration and debated the racial injustice of NRPF with policymakers. UoG coproduced research had equipped the women with the confidence and skills to highlight to policymakers the connection between immigration policy and race equality policy, pointing to potential improvements in how policymakers can engage with migrants impacted by the policy [E1, E9]: *“The House of Commons presentation performance and research helped to boost my confidence, you are actually acting out what happens in everyday life ...because it’s not just saying it but you are showing it ... we can tell our stories to the politicians so they realise we are still human beings...it’s empowering us black women, because this country is very racist towards...migrant black women ... it’s given me the confidence, courage, boldness and knowledge to challenge the system, and not feel intimidated”* [Deborah, E1: p. 9].

**Employment opportunities:** Over 90% of women felt new skills learned (e.g. ‘soft’ skills such as leadership, interpersonal, teamwork) improved their employment opportunities [E3, E1: p.5] and performance at work [E4]. This directly led to job interviews and offers for 2 women: *“I could write down on my application all the skills I have learnt and the leadership training ... I’m convinced this helped me to get the job”* [Yewande, E3].

### **Improved community organisation services, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Underpinning research by UoG during the assessment period was coproduced with community organisations [E1: p.1]. All except *Creating Ground* were new to using creative participatory methods with migrant communities. 93% of the organisations said the research made a considerable difference to practice and service delivery, enabling them to grow engagement with community members and draw on lived local knowledge expertise for service planning [E1: p. 6-7]. Benefits of the research collaboration included expanded reach of services; organisational

learning leading to diversified funding streams, and improved service delivery using novel approaches [E1: p.6-7]. Key collaborating organisations include: *Citizens UK* (London region): formed of 21 local alliances (96,000 people from 100+ London-wide member institutions including faith and migrant groups, G.P. surgeries, schools, and other community organisations); *Magpie Project*: gives practical support to 500+ mothers per year with NRPF in East London; *Creating Ground*: supports 210 migrant women in S.E London/Kent using art activities to improve individual and collective wellbeing; *Praxis*: leading experts, helping 2,000 migrants per year in South East England with immigration, legal and housing advice; *RENAIS/*: 23-year history supporting BAME/migrant people to connect with their community, e.g. in 2018 worked with 1,500 individuals across 15 London Boroughs in employment support programmes; *Regional Refugee Forum NE*: consortium and collective voice of 100+ organisations in North East England, influences policy and practice for refugee/asylum seeker community [E1: p.1].

**Expanded reach of services:** Adoption of UoG's participatory methodological approach [G2] fed, in turn, into the creation of new online projects, activities and resources for organisations, extending the reach of services. For example, research with *Creating Ground* from 2019 onwards, led to a co-created story-telling/film-making project 'Stronger Together' on the 'hostile environment, a co-created Creative Toolkit, and an online exhibition [E5]. The toolkit and film were used to introduce three new online courses for UK community practitioners: teaching through drama; inclusive and participatory practices for community work; creative tools for community organising and leadership [E5]. These new resources helped *Creating Ground* during the pandemic to pivot and adapt to online service provision. This strengthened their outreach, widened participation beyond previous geographical boundaries [E5] and enabled overseas participation (migrant women in Columbia, Japan, Italy, Spain) [E5]. "[W]orking with the university provided ..a legitimacy to our work ... that we were supported by someone who had experience of using those methodologies, those approaches ... especially in these difficult times ... where people cannot really meet face-to-face for classes" [Creating Ground, E5]. *Praxis* attributed gaining their successful GBP107,000 Paul Hamlyn Foundation grant, '*Building Capacity to work with migrants in grassroots organisations*' to the research collaboration, in particular learning about co-production projects (awarded 2020, delayed start due to COVID-19 [E6].

**Improved service delivery using novel approaches:** G3 research provided training and learning resources on the policy value of PAR research for civic engagement and participation of migrants/marginalised groups. Embedding migrant women's lived experiences and leadership into the values of community organising led to improved services responsive to user needs [E2, E5, E6, E7]. Community practitioners noted the mothers' performances "*was the very first time that our mums saw their reality reflected back at them... it was quite early on in our organisational growth - and I think what it did was that it let mums know that we were really about transferring power to them, and saying, 'We are not the experts, you are the experts'... It gave us confidence to try more creative collaborative projects for the mothers to share their stories*" [Magpie Project, E8].

### **Putting a 'human face' on national NRPF policy debates**

Omar Khan, former Director of the *Runnymede Trust* (2014-20), the UK's leading race equality think tank, directly credited the UoG research with having "*put a human face on NRPF policy*" [E9]. From 2016 onwards, the research empowered migrant women to act as agents of impact and policy change through directly intervening in policy debates [E9]. UoG research provided the *Runnymede Trust* with a stated position on NRPF, changed how the organisation engaged with communities and those affected by an injustice, and supplied a new model for how the organisation worked with academics [E9]. UoG research connected into broader national policy campaigns and significantly contributed to raising the profile of NRPF issues, leading to the launch of the APPG on No Recourse to Public Funds on 21 May 2019 [E9].

**Migrant women as policy change agents:** Migrant women gained new skills and confidence to challenge NRPF policy and intervene in debates [E1 p. 3]. The coproduced 'Finding Strength' film was used as a learning/training resource for grassroots groups to develop local action methodology for community organising [E7]. The research led to an invitation by Kate Green MP, Chair of the APPG on Migration, to co-host an event with *Runnymede*, at the House of Commons in Dec 2017 [E10]. This enabled the mothers to lead a participatory theatre session, perform their stories, speak to policymakers about negative impacts of NRPF policies on their lived experiences, and advocate for more inclusive policies and practices for migrant communities [E1 10-11, E9].

**Providing the Runnymede Trust's stated position on NRPF:** Established in 1968, *Runnymede* is the UK's foremost independent race equality think tank, leading some of the most important events and developments in race relations and tackling racism in the UK. It acts as secretariat for the APPG on Race and Community, and for the UK Race and Europe Network, a UK-wide network of more than 200 organisations involved in race relations and combating racism at a local, national and European level. The UoG research (2016-18) is directly credited with being the driving force for providing *Runnymede* with a stated position on NRPF policy and immigration. For the first time it gave them an opportunity and a responsibility to speak out on NRPF as injustice [E9]: “[UoG] research was important in terms of deepening our policy work on immigration generally, specifically doing this work on NRPF. The work was important..., for speaking up for this group, connecting it to the race equality issue” [E9]. This enabled the *Trust* to establish NRPF as a key driver of later anti-immigration policies resulting from the UK government's ‘hostile environment’, e.g. the Windrush Scandal: UoG research ‘put a human face on NRPF policy... it later influenced our work on Windrush, having the human voice come through really resonated’ [E9]. The PAR-based research interventions helped shift organisational practice on how the *Trust* generally engaged with user-communities affected by racial injustice [E9]. It also gave the *Trust* a new model for working with academics to produce outputs and undertake activities on social justice issues [E9]. The briefing report UoG produced for *Runnymede* [R2], a free resource available to download on their website, provided tips and guidance for organisations to apply PAR methods for engagement with marginalised communities. *Runnymede* endorsed this work as a model of good practice for organisations, and it broadened the *Trust's* platform to campaign for improved rights for racialised migrant communities [E9].

**Raising the profile of NRPF policy issues:** The research influenced campaign work of certain organisations aimed at policy change, e.g. *Citizens UK* used tools and resources generated from the research to improve user-involvement in community action and campaign organising for social justice issues [E7]. The research, and associated migrant women's interventions, formed a key part of the evidence-base and community-led solutions taken up by numerous organisations (charities, campaign groups, lawyers, local councils, political lobbyists) that led to the High Court declaring in May 2020 that aspects of NRPF policy were unlawful and to allow migrants to apply for a change in condition and access to public funds, under certain criteria [E9]. The UoG research was unique as a catalyst for ‘humanising’ policy engagement on NRPF, and in applying creative methods to prepare the ground to push the issue up the political agenda [E9,E10]. This ultimately led to the launch of a new APPG on NRPF in May 2019. Kate Green MP, reflected on the Dec 2017 APPG on Migration event: “It is always powerful for policy makers and politicians to hear first-hand from those with lived experience of a policy's impact. Since the event, NRPF has risen up the political agenda, with awareness having grown as a result of the cumulative impact of events like this, and latterly because of the pandemic. The importance of bringing social action research to the attention of parliamentarians should not be underestimated” [E10]. Omar Khan reflects on the importance of UoG's early uptake of NRPF research, “If you hadn't been doing research, you hadn't been organising in these communities, if you hadn't been listening to these groups at all, then when the moment came, we would not have been ready to try to push the door open further ... so that when someone does start to listen, there's actually some activity, there's some research, there's some engagement, there's some mobilisation that can happen” [E9].

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1 Report: Research evaluation
- E2 Testimonial: Participant representatives, *Creating Ground*
- E3 Testimonial: Migrant mother ('Yewande'),
- E4 Testimonial: Migrant mother ('Lucie'), about film *Finding Strength*: <https://bit.ly/3voMJEn>
- E5 Testimonial: Laura Marziale, Director, *Creating Ground*
- E6 Testimonial: Bethan Lant, Advocacy, Training & Development Manager, *Praxis*
- E7 Testimonial: Paulina Tamborrel Signoret, Organising Team Manager, *Citizens UK*
- E8 Testimonial: Jane Williams, CEO Founder, *Magpie Project*
- E9 Testimonial: Dr Omar Khan, Former Director (2014-20), *Runnymede Trust*
- E10 Testimonial: Kate Green OBE MP, Shadow Education Secretary, Chair APPG Migration (2015-2020)