

Appendix 2 – Lessons Learnt

Members of the Refugee Resettlement Group and the volunteers were asked to reflect on the planning, preparation and support that they have provided to the refugees and in particular to consider What went well?, What could have been improved? and What will we do differently in the future?

What went well?	What could have been improved?	What will we do differently?
Refugee Resettlement Group		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work that has been done has showed partnership at its best. The commitment given to help so many vulnerable people is a testimony to the humanitarian work of all partners. • Forward planning and resettlement meetings that occurred both before and after the arrival of the families were invaluable and that these meetings helped to identify, address and escalate issues that arose and helped to prevent potential issues from arising as all agencies were aware and worked together. • Strong and committed leadership, supported by Chief Executive and Elected Members • Strong relationship between the families and those that support them. • Ongoing learning for all involved and continually reviewing support provided. • The weekly schedule of appointments keeps everyone informed of ESOL classes and appointment at BAC, alongside medical appointments etc. • Shared community strategy in place that everyone understood and put into action. • Preparing social media guides and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress should not be measured against our own cultural expectations. It is important to remember that these are all individual people and that we should look at what progress has been made and not become frustrated at how much is still required. This is key to promote positivity between each agency as negativity can be very contagious and can easily spread having a negative impact on the project. • Accommodating last minute changes to the weekly schedule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of and representation at meetings could decline as programme progresses. • Identify no more than two key stakeholders per organisation and instructions are routed through them. • Listen to how the Syrian families feel about key subjects and do not assume that we know what is best. We need to be flexible in our way of working. • The Syrian families wish to integrate into the community while retaining their own culture and the support provided has to be sympathetic to their culture. • To remember the massive journey that each individual has had to undergo to arrive here and to be mindful that each individual is still dealing with stresses and issues related to leaving behind their home country, family and friends and that this could make it hard for them to feel settled and to attend services offered. • It's a natural urge to want to fix a problem when it is presented to you however it is essential to support families to solve issues themselves where possible to encourage ownership to promote independence.

communications advice for the refugees.

- Joined up communication was key in dealing with media constructively and confidently – reducing media interaction and therefore intrusion into our refugees' lives depended on everyone from the council and partner agencies, to the volunteers and wider community.
- Remain focused on what benefits the refugees – we could have accepted interview opportunities that would have benefited the council/community groups/Bute by showcasing our work positively, but this would have contradicted the 'low profile' communications strategy agreed to support the refugees who wanted no profile.
- The Welcome Pack translated into Arabic in each house on arrival.
- The '999 Day' with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service was an excellent event which allowed information to be shared with the families on the process of calling each service in an emergency.
- Employing Arabic interpreters rather than relying on agency workers. Having a choice of interpreters to match personality and skills means that support can be tailored to need.
- Preparation plans for meeting families at the airport and bringing them safely to their new homes were meticulously planned and able to accommodate last minute changes due to

- It is important that professional officers and agencies understand the frustrations faced by the families and that we do not take anything personally. The agencies involved are on a learning curve and by sharing information from other local authorities and through meetings such as COSLA this helps to give workers a broader awareness of issues.
- Many lessons have been learnt by staff working with the existing families, this has meant that the new families are benefitting from advisers who have been through the process.
- Relationships do build up over time, however to ensure relationships remain professional, it is healthy to change the advisers around, giving families and advisers a fresh face to work with.

poor weather and potential ferry disruptions.		
Volunteers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of inaugural meetings with volunteers, including dissemination of information; briefing and guidance re press; making use of a wide range of local people: their ideas, skills and experience. • System of ID cards for volunteers • Sorting and distribution of donated clothing, toys and household items. • Staffing and organisation of St Andrew’s hall during the first phase. • Regular liaison with interpreters to act as a link between volunteers and families. This has evolved over time - understandably, interpreters were less accessible to volunteers in the early phases. • The recent appointment of refugee support worker is already making a difference in terms of organisation and liaison. • The Bute Welcomes Refugees Facebook page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So many individuals from the public had watched the atrocities on television that these families had experienced and had a tremendous desire to offer their time to help but possibly did not have the correct knowledge/ training to carry this out • Better information sharing between the Refugee Resettlement Group and the volunteers. • The significant interest from press and film makers. • Advance training of and protocol for volunteers (already in hand) • It was helpful when the ministers of religion were involved at the early stage, providing a male presence to relate to the men. It’s a pity that once their input was over, there have been so few men involved as volunteers. • Improve sharing of information about other commitments, local events and trips. • Accommodation for meetings or events is sometimes difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaunch the volunteer programme to help with integration with a more diverse group of volunteers to include a range of age groups and male as well as female. • Provide ongoing training that reflects the needs of volunteers and families. • Regular volunteer meetings to discuss progress, issues arising and future plans. • Make contact with volunteer groups in other parts of Scotland to share ideas.
Housing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A huge enthusiasm from the stakeholders involved to deliver the project and meet the Syrian families’ needs. • Identifying appropriate housing and making it ready for the families. • The hands-on work of council staff, housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cultural needs of the families regarding a preference for showers were not taken into consideration. • Resettling families on the edge of town when public transport stops early in the evening has led some families feeling more isolated 	

<p>agencies and support workers to meet and settle the families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to the arrival of the families, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service were able to liaise with the housing providers and provide home fire safety advice during a site visit to each of the homes. • Support workers have liaised successfully with landlords to deal with housing issues. • Families have benefited from energy advice, changing tariffs, setting up direct debits and getting the best deal. 	<p>than those in the town centre.</p>	
Education		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and flexibility of ESOL provision by qualified and experienced ESOL teachers have allowed us to run beginners, intermediate and advanced classes for men and women and one to one provision for those with literacy difficulties. • The Rothesay Library staff have been very helpful, both in welcoming Syrian families, ordering in bilingual children's books and acting as a 'post box' for materials for volunteers to collect. • Volunteers English teachers have been able to focus on what the families identify as being important to them e.g. their desire to gain employment, start businesses, or be more involved in the community and are able to tailor the language support provided to attempt to meet those needs (the recent sessions on driving vocabulary are an example of this). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve sharing between adult learning and volunteers on the refugee's progress in their ESOL classes. • Sharing information on planned activities with volunteer English teachers to ensure there time is not wasted. • Very early assessment, both formal and informal, would have led to better understanding of levels of English for the adults on arrival. Initial personality and other clashes within the group made for a slightly surprising challenge, and we quickly found it necessary to be flexible around attendance; this has now largely settled. • Availability of college courses for those whose English is not yet fluent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to provide routine and structure as continuity is a key factor in language development, particularly for those who are struggling to learn English. • Find a meeting venue (perhaps smaller and cosier than St Andrew's) to be used as a drop in centre, maybe only on one or 2 occasions in the week – to enhance language practice for those receiving 1 to 1 support while also ensuring that others do not feel 'left out' or isolated. • Assumptions around learning styles should be checked with the adults themselves. British experience of how adults best learn a second language can be challenged by those coming from a very different learning culture. Formal teaching with text books has now been provided at the request of the (more advanced) participants.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bute Tiddlers have warmly welcomed Syrian mums. • Rothesay playgroup able to provide support for a family requiring childcare. • School enrolment out of hours has worked very well allowing the families time to tour the school and meet the staff team • Preparations and ongoing support in the school, regular review meetings for Universal Children’s Plan with pupils and their parents • Good communication with school, support team, interpreters, parents and pupils 		
Welfare		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising the income of the families has gone very well. Ensuring that all benefits are in place, responding to changes in circumstances. • Alongside the basic benefits, advisers have fast tracked ESA claims, Scottish Welfare Fund applications, Warm Home Discounts and Healthy Start Vouchers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each group of arrivals when benefits are first claimed there have been delays by the job centre in processing claims. The fast track does not seem to work. 	
Employability		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families have been supported to access volunteering/integration opportunities including: Rock the Prom, Healthy Eating on a Budget, Bute Produce, Bute Fest, Gardens on Montague St, Oasis. • Three individuals were successful in securing employment at Mount Stuart. • Helping families’ access provisional driving licences and information on UK driving test. • Supporting families with employment rights 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letting the families know about the employment opportunities on the island through a career / job fair or similar

<p>and responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment opportunities and work experience have also been explored. 		
Entrepreneurialism		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prior knowledge of the refugees in running a business in Syria and their commitment to start businesses in the UK • The initial training delivered by RTE (Rebuilding Through Excellence – Home Office partner provider) covered relevant topics quite well. • Availability of Business Gateway staff to hold one-to-one meetings with individuals and offer ongoing support. • Business Gateway staff able to arrange meetings locally with council officers/local business people and able to broker introductions. • The support of Business Gateway staff in supporting the creation of the business plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support designed by RTE of a three-day programme delivered over three consecutive days did not allow time for reflection, absorption or learning of the topics. • RTE’s lack of knowledge of the Scottish business landscape and regulations and lack of knowledge of rural Scotland. • RTE’s telephone coaching sessions. • Lack of available/affordable commercial premises on Bute to enable those who want to start businesses to do so. It is crucial for those who want to start businesses and create employment that commercial premises are available. • Unwillingness of SULCO to agree loans in principle which lengthens the process meaning refugees are losing potential premises. • The frustration the refugees are understandably feeling at the lack of available premises and the slow progress being made. • Lack of access to Sharia finance in Scotland, i.e. having to negotiate through RTE & SULCO in England. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver tailored start up workshop over a longer period, e.g. four sessions at weekly intervals allowing for reflection and research. • Schedule in one to one sessions as and when relevant. • Schedule in sessions with relevant council officers e.g. environmental health, trading standards, planning etc. • Ensure availability of Sharia finance from a Scottish provider who can meet with, and talk to, the refugees face to face
Health		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers helping escort families to hospitals and other appointments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of dental care on the Island coupled with families requiring significant dental 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support workers have liaised successfully with NHS regarding medical appointments. • Sessions by health professionals in St Andrews Hall. • The midwives care and support. 	<p>treatment whether due to the effects of torture or prolonged periods without being able to access treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for arranging volunteers to accompany families to initial medical appointments off island could have been simpler. • Initial difficulties with NHS ensuring that translators are available for appointments as some of the families have been left very frustrated after attending appointments on the mainland with no translator available. 	
Integration		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions from local organisations such as the dance school doing a display and the Syrian men memorably reconnecting to their traditional dance. • The ‘thank you’ lunch cooked by the Syrians • Reception at the mosque • The welcome in St Andrews Hall when the families arrived • Bringing senior pupils from Rothesay Academy to the airport to meet families ensured that the school at its pupils were at the heart of the community welcome. • The joint welcome message from the churches in the hall and in the Buteman. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative headlines in the press caused upset in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More cultural awareness sessions for the volunteers and the Syrians alike. • Seminars for raising awareness about the role of women in the British society, and stressing the fact that women can be leaders, work and be independent. • Organise a conference or open day involving all the current agencies, families and volunteers and keeping places for other members of the community. This could also help with future employment opportunities.