

Evaluation of the Gateway Protection Programme

Commissioned by the
Resettlement Inter Agency Partnership

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Introduction

In March 2005, the Resettlement Interagency Partnership (RIAP) commissioned an independent evaluation of the delivery of the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP). Various agencies in RIAP, funded via the Home Office for the Programme had agreed to pool evaluation budgets, in order to ensure an integrated evaluation process. The overall aims of the evaluation were:

- ◆ To assess the effectiveness of the Resettlement Interagency Partnership (RIAP) and Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) in delivering services and support that are in the best interests of refugees.
- ◆ To identify the key learning points and best practice from the experience of delivering the Programme to date.
- ◆ To provide a set of recommendations and suggested models to help further develop the Programme.

In carrying out the evaluation, considerations of cost effectiveness and value for money have been included. The ethos of the evaluation has been 'forward looking', identifying strengths and areas of good practice, and considering how these might be built on. Where particular challenges and areas in need of further development have emerged, these have been constructively draw upon as lessons learnt in this pilot period, so that they can inform future work on the Programme.

As part of the agreed evaluation process, individual feedback will be provided to key RIAP and other delivery partners. This detailed feedback is not included within this report.

The Gateway Protection Programme involves a number of delivery stages, pre-arrival and then post arrival in the UK. Those elements of the programme that are delivered in the countries from which refugees travel are referred to in the evaluation, particularly where they have had an impact on resettlement and on the services offered within the UK. However, they have not been considered in the same detail as the post arrival stages, since the level of fieldwork required for this was not within the agreed scope of this evaluation.

This report begins with a summary of key findings and recommendations, followed by a brief background to GPP and description of the evaluation methodology. The detailed evaluation findings and analysis are then presented in four sections that consider the delivery of services, the structure and function of the Programme, the partnership approach, and principles for future development.

Executive Summary

The evaluation has identified a range of strong and effective activity to support the delivery of the Gateway Protection Programme, alongside areas that would benefit from further attention for the Programme to reach its full potential. The key findings and recommendations arising from the evaluation include:

A successful, high quality pilot

- The Programme is delivering high quality, appropriate services that are helping some of the most vulnerable refugees to successfully integrate and settle in the UK. Delivery partners are committed and often work beyond their contracted duties to ensure that refugees are given the best possible chances of integration. Refugee feedback indicates high levels of satisfaction with services, and significant determination to resettle and become self-sufficient. All the stages of the Programme are necessary and effective in providing a supported process of re-location and resettlement.
- The range and quality of services currently offered should be maintained and replicated as the Programme expands. Suggested alternative arrangements for how services are organised and delivered should be further considered.

Some further service development would be beneficial

- Whilst the range and quality of services provided for the refugees is very good, as might be expected, there are some areas that would benefit from further development. Some key areas for this include broadening ESOL provision so that it responds more closely to the range of refugee needs, increasing support for access to learning and work opportunities, additional help with budgeting and benefits, and clarification of the policy and practice on family reunion. These and other issues are discussed on pages 9-11 of the report.
- Partners involved in the delivery of the areas where development or modification have been suggested should carry out further examination of the key issues so that these can be addressed for the current refugee cohorts and new groups. Some initial recommendations for action are included on pages 9-11 and also in the check list in Appendix 1.

Good practice and bold piloting has a "ripple effect"

- Partners have grasped the opportunities presented by a new resettlement programme to develop good practice and pilot new integration techniques. This has included combining GPP funding with other streams to develop specialist refugee health services for **all** refugees (GPP and others) and finding innovative ways of dealing with benefits issues. Many contributors commented on the wider impact of the Programme in informing the development of refugee services as a whole. The level of funding and partnership approach have been key enabling factors in this wider impact.
- The good practice and innovation developed to date should be shared widely and, where appropriate, 'mainstreamed' into GPP and other refugee programmes. It is essential that there continues to be sufficient funding for good practice to continue to be developed.

Low refugee numbers raise concerns

- To date, 150 refugees have been resettled, significantly fewer than the 500 that were planned for. A key reason for this is the lack of Local Authority involvement, with only two Authorities currently participating. Although direct discussions with non-participating Authorities were not part of the remit of this evaluation, there appear to be a range of reasons for non-participation, not least the political sensitivity around resettlement and the pressure on housing. Efforts are being made to bring more Local Authorities on board and progress is being made in some cases, but differences in opinion are still evident between the Home Office and voluntary sector partners on the best way forward. A further factor in the low number of refugees participating in the Programme appears to be some difficulties and delays in arrangements for refugees to enter the UK. The scope of the evaluation prevents further comment on this aspect.
- Efforts to engage additional Local Authorities in the Programme should continue. Discussions between voluntary sector partners and the Home Office should take place to explore and agree a clear strategy for Local Authority engagement. This strategy should seek to maximise the experience, 'bargaining power' and influence that each partner has to offer, and minimise confusion, duplication and the potential for multiple approaches to Local Authorities. Further examination

of the 'in country' arrangements for prospective refugee groups may be helpful if it is felt that aspects of the process could be causing a 'bottleneck'.

Value for money

- The low number of refugees currently on the Programme raises concerns about GPP's cost effectiveness, given that the infrastructure was established on the expectation of three times the volume of refugees. It is not possible to make a 'like for like' cost comparison with other Programmes because of the way GPP is costed and funded, but it is clear that funding has enabled high quality front line services to provide additional impact that is of added value. The reduction in infrastructure costs that has taken place in response to the need to 'downsize' GPP to reflect the volume of refugees is unfortunate. Whilst it appears justified if the alternative were a cut in funding for frontline services it is important to ensure that the capacity to manage and develop the Programme nationally is retained.
- In ensuring that the costs of the Programme reflect the volume of refugees and resultant infrastructure needs, care should be taken to avoid cutting funding that would adversely affect the service to refugees or prevent the further development of resettlement and integration services.

Local delivery partnerships are strong

- The local delivery partnerships in Bolton and Sheffield are generally strong and effective, demonstrating good working relationships between Local Authorities and not-for-profit organisations. Appropriate local variations indicate the need for a flexible approach in expanding the Programme in other locations. The way in which the GPP structure was originally established, particularly the need for a quick response, has meant that some other local voluntary sector groups with expertise and existing links with the Local Authority have not been involved in the Programme. There is evidence of some teething tensions between partners in the newer resettlement area, Bolton, particularly with regard to information sharing and clarification of roles, and a need for greater opportunities for practitioners to meet and develop closer working relationships.
- The successful, multi-agency approach to local delivery should be drawn on when considering models for additional resettlement areas, including flexibility to maximise the use of existing organisations with expertise and established working relationships. Local partnerships should ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for practitioners to meet, in addition to strategic meetings.

An urgent need for roles to be clarified

- The roles of partners in the **delivery** of GPP services appear to be clear, however there is a lack of clarity about management and development roles, causing duplication of effort and tension, particularly between RIAP and the Home Office. RIAP's role is presented in a variety of ways, and partners are involved in the sometimes difficult combination of advocacy and delivery, resulting in a further source of tension on occasions. The withdrawal of funding for the Resettlement Interagency Team (RIAT) and proposal for a Home Office located Operational Development Adviser post have not clarified management roles sufficiently to date. The procurement methods and direct contracting arrangements between the Home Office and delivery partners have also created complexity in terms of understanding the role of RIAP, and mixed messages about whether collaboration or competition from partners is expected. The need for greater clarity, openness and trust amongst **all** partners is identified as crucial to GPP's development.
- The roles of RIAP and the Home Office in terms of programme management and development should be discussed, agreed and recorded, perhaps through a partnership agreement. The Government's compact for working with the voluntary sector should inform this process, including consideration of the advocacy role of voluntary sector organisations. Clear processes and criteria for the selection of additional delivery partners should also be agreed, drawing on the Active Communities Unit guide to procurement as appropriate. RIAP also now needs to review its purpose and objectives in the light of changed circumstances. The section of the report on partnership working (pages 14-19) and the checklist for action in Appendix 1 are intended to help inform future developments.

Brief background to the Programme

In 2002 the UK Government implemented a policy which allowed for the establishment of a resettlement scheme for vulnerable refugees who are in need of long term protection. Called the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP), it works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and aims to bring 500 refugees annually to the UK.

Refugees are selected for the Programme on the basis that they have pressing humanitarian or security needs and are not able to return to their countries of origin or integrate locally. To date the GPP has offered resettlement support to 150 refugees of Congolese and Liberian origin, who have settled in Sheffield and Bolton. At the time of writing this report, it is about to resettle a new group of Burmese refugees.

The Programme is fully funded by the Home Office, and it is delivered in partnership with the Resettlement Inter-Agency Partnership, International Organisation for Migration, Local Authorities, various Government departments and other agencies.

The Resettlement Inter-agency Partnership (RIAP) is a partnership of 8 voluntary sector organisations: - British Red Cross (BRC); International Rescue Committee (IRC); Migrant Helpline (MH) Refugee Action (RA) Refugee Arrivals Project (RAP) Refugee Council (RC), Refugee Housing Association and Scottish Refugee Council (SRC). The work of RIAP was supported by the Resettlement Interagency Team (RIAT) based at the Refugee Council until March 2005 when the funding for this team was withdrawn. At the time of preparing the report, RIAP plans to continue functioning as a partnership, though some of the revised arrangements in terms of RIAP and the Programme have not yet been finalised.

Evaluation methodology

The fieldwork and desk research for this evaluation was carried out in April 2005 and involved:

- ◆ discussions with the Resettlement Interagency Team and other Refugee Council staff;
- ◆ a group discussion with RIAP partners;
- ◆ individual face to face and telephone interviews with RIAP partners and other key GPP partners;
- ◆ discussions with Home Office staff;
- ◆ face to face and telephone interviews with local delivery partners and practitioners in Bolton and Sheffield;
- ◆ discussions with refugees in Bolton, carried out in 5 small groups of 3 – 4 people, using interpreters when appropriate; and
- ◆ desk review of RIAP paper based materials including programme plans, sample minutes of meetings, reports, progress summaries, issues papers and reviews of previous resettlement programmes in the UK.

Refugees in Sheffield were not interviewed as part of this evaluation, as they are involved in ongoing research being carried out by IRSS at the Home Office. A meeting was held with IRSS to ensure that this evaluation complemented their research.

Over 40 interviews and group discussions were conducted for the evaluation, involving more than 70 contributors. Interviews were structured using a standard set of questions, tailored to suit the various roles of the contributors. A list of contributors is provided at the end of the report, along with the master set of questions used for discussions.

Direct quotes from those who participated in the research and discussions are included in the report in italics, though the quotes are not attributed to protect confidentiality. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who assisted us with the research, provided information and took part in interviews and discussions. Their views have very much helped to shape this report. We would also particularly wish to thank staff at Refugee Action Bolton, for making arrangements for our discussions with the various groups of refugees.

A pilot that is delivering

In its first year of operation, the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) has offered resettlement support to 150 refugees of Congolese and Liberian origin, and, at the time of writing this report, is about to resettle a new group of Burmese refugees. 69 refugees have been settled in Sheffield and are just completing their year long programme, and 81 were brought to Bolton in November and December 2004.

GPP has been in a pilot phase, and as such has achieved a considerable amount in establishing the framework and basis for further development and expansion. However, it has not been able to take the projected 500 refugees hoped for in the first year, largely due to the difficulty in getting Local Authorities to be involved in the Programme, as is discussed later in the report.

A wide range of organisations have been involved in delivering the programme, including various international, national and local voluntary organisations, housing associations, and assorted central and local government authorities and departments. There are a number of specific stages in the programme and the year long resettlement phase comprises a whole number of aspects. Key aspects of the **pre-arrival and UK arrival** stage include:

- Identifying, agreeing and processing applications for the scheme;
- preparing the refugees accepted onto the programme, including providing cultural orientation;
- identifying, negotiating and preparing resettlement services in the UK host areas; and
- managing the refugees travel to and within the UK, and providing initial reception and orientation.

The year long **resettlement** stage provides a holistic package of services to support resettlement including:

- the provision of accommodation;
- access to services like education and health;
- benefits to cover essential living costs;
- the provision of ESOL classes where appropriate and vocational training; and
- ongoing support around resettlement, on both an individual basis but also via community development and the coordination of volunteer support.

Comments from refugees explaining that *"before I was not safe, now I feel safe"* and *"everything has been OK – I am happy with life"* indicate their positive experiences and support throughout the Programme. Inevitably there are areas which could be further developed or strengthened, as discussed on pages 9-11, but indications are that the process and services offered so far have served the refugees and their needs very well.

Delivery in Sheffield and Bolton has been similar, with some slight variations in approach, reflecting the flexibility that is clearly important in effective local delivery. A brief description of the range of services and support is outlined below, all of which are offered in Bolton and Sheffield unless indicated otherwise.

- ◆ **Housing**, a fundamental element of support, appears to have been successfully provided to all refugees, overcoming ongoing challenges. Housing provision has included stock from the social, private and local authority sectors and what has been provided appears sustainable, with long term leases generally offered. In both locations Housing Associations have been used. There were some initial difficulties in getting housing ready in the relatively short time frame, particularly in terms of securing larger houses and some refugees were initially housed in temporary accommodation until longer term housing was available. There are ongoing housing issues to be handled, with families splitting up or members of the extended family wanting or not wanting to live in the same household. Clients have been offered a **'furnished package'** to the value of an equivalent standard community care grant and the items become the property of the refugees. A number of partners stressed that this package represents a basic minimum.

- ◆ **Specialist housing management support** has helped refugees to maintain successfully their tenancies. In Sheffield, high levels of support were required in the first 6 months and Bolton is now in this phase of the 'resettlement cycle'. As might be expected, levels of support needed gradually tail off in the second part of the year as refugees become more settled. In Sheffield, at the end of the year's programme, tenancies were transferred directly to the refugees and in the run up to this they were encouraged to use increasingly the services of mainstream housing officers.
- ◆ **Case worker support** appears greatly valued by the refugees. Again, this is particularly intensive work in the initial part of the programme which is a period of major stress for the refugees, though new challenges do emerge as the resettlement process continues. One notable 'stage', currently faced by staff in Bolton and recognised by Sheffield case workers, occurs at around the 4-5 month point. At this stage, refugees feel sufficiently settled and 'safe', allowing underlying family and group conflicts and stresses to emerge and anxieties to surface. This recognised feature of the resettlement process indicates that the provision of support for 12 months is well justified in helping refugees to deal with issues that might otherwise jeopardise their successful integration. Whilst caseworker support is clearly intensive at particular points, staff appeared to have a strong awareness of boundaries, encouraging refugees to "*learn about, and how to use mainstream services*" and "*promoting the links between our clients and the community*". There is a sense of pride in the achievements of the refugees in moving towards self-sufficiency.
- ◆ **Community development and coordinating volunteering** is allocated to staff in both locations, but arranged slightly differently. The Sheffield team has 2 caseworkers, a community development worker and a volunteer coordinator. In Bolton one of the caseworkers has a half time role as the volunteer coordinator and there is an administrator who does not have a caseload. The community development aspect of the Programme is an important complement to the individual casework, helping to promote the community cohesion vital to successful long term integration.
- ◆ **Health services** included finding GPs for all refugees, as well as other services delivered by a range of health professionals including school nurses and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health staff. The heaviest 'cost' for GPs is in the initial stages, with the requirement for initial health assessment, immunisation, referrals and treatment. The Programme's funding of incentives for GPs, interpreting costs and other ongoing support for the various health professionals was considered critical in getting these services in place. The areas where refugees have been housed often are those already experiencing strains on the local GP services. Also, in Bolton, where refugees are housed in widespread locations, the incentives and support for GPs had to be spread across a number of practices, rather than the preferred model of developing 3 or 4 specialist centres. Other health services have also been provided such as access to rape counselling services; orientation for using health services; health promotion; information on the common ailments in the UK; and healthy cooking and eating classes.
- ◆ Different approaches have been taken in helping refugee children to access **education**. In Sheffield, the appropriate schools local to refugee families were approached and places organised. Some children were in school very soon after arrival, but for some, especially those in temporary accommodation, the process took somewhat longer. Despite anxiety from some schools about how well the GPP children could integrate given the traumatic experiences they have had, including from some schools which had children from asylum seeker families on their roll, the process has been successful. Support measures for schools included reassurance that help was available, employing additional tutors and teaching assistants, providing a wide range of resources, promoting links with parents and close working with case workers. The team also arranged early intervention for behaviour issues that may have prompted exclusion e.g. art therapy, and help with costs of going on school trips to promote integration. The key was "*about making the schools feel skilled and able to do this, which they generally have done*". It was noted that children in primary school appeared to have integrated more readily than those at secondary school – although this may simply be the effect of age. 'Maintenance levels' of support for schools are continuing, as well as work with nursery age children.

In Bolton, a different tack was taken, with a separate school established at which all the children initially attended for varying periods of time in Key Stage classes, before integration into mainstream schools. This was seen as a way of preparing the children for the culture and expectations of their new schools and allowed them "*time for them to settle and*

have their needs and levels assessed". The teachers also stressed that it gave time for what they strongly felt was post traumatic behaviour to begin to be addressed. At the time of writing, the majority of children had moved into mainstream schools, though there was some concern expressed on how long this process took. Some respondents also expressed ambivalence about the general approach adopted.

- ◆ To enable refugees to **access benefits and support to find work**, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) organised a whole day for each group of arrivals, gathering together a range of agencies in one location to process applications for benefit. Staff from JCP, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Connexions and National Insurance Numbers Office were involved, along with interpreters. This entailed *"clearing a whole floor – like a mini job fair"* and a lot of preparation, as officers tried to anticipate the benefits that the refugees would require to expedite the form filling process. JCP officers who were trained in working with clients with specialist needs were used, as they were *"acutely aware"* of how crucial it was to get benefits accurately and speedily sorted out to avoid hardship.

Beyond the initial application for benefits, clients have had access to a range of services. All adults had interviews with JCP staff and were entitled to the full range of training and support available under programmes such as New Deal, including ESOL classes. As is now usual for all claimants, refugees who were single parents and not strictly required to 'sign on' for benefit also had access to an interview with a JCP adviser, to ensure that they have help in accessing the UK job market. A number of refugees in Sheffield now have jobs, some are studying including on ESOL courses organised by JCP, and others are taking up volunteering opportunities as a way of experiencing aspects of the UK workplace and gaining references. Given the barriers that these refugees have to overcome, and the overall levels of refugee unemployment, this represents significant progress.

A positive, well planned experience

The pre-arrival and initial arrival orientation sessions provided for refugees were felt to be very helpful, with *"good information"* so that *"I knew lots about life in the UK before I got here"*. Importantly, refugees felt that the resettlement process was as they expected it to be, and that the services they had received throughout the process were also well organised. The important role played by case workers (and others such as housing support staff), who *"really understand the nature of support"*, in supporting the integration and resettlement process was also particularly highlighted in the evaluation, both by refugees themselves in Bolton and by partners in Sheffield.

The opportunity that the Gateway Programme offers to plan for the delivery of services was commented on by many partners, allowing for needs to be anticipated, provision to be lined up beforehand and staffed adequately briefed. This is not to say that the work was not testing or requiring specialist skills, but by comparison with other work with refugees and asylum seekers, it was relatively orderly.

Getting on with their lives – evidence of integration

Respondents from organisations across the board commented on the extent that the refugees themselves just wanted to *'get on with their lives'*. There was a strong feeling that *"they have seemed to have found their feet very quickly"* and *"settled down phenomenally well"* so that they *"are really starting to be part of the community"*. Refugees in Bolton highlighted their priorities for integration in terms of learning English (for those who needed to); studying and gaining qualifications, and getting into work. They were particularly keen for their children to get on at school. These priorities, apart from learning English, are those that we might expect from anyone wanting to 'get on in life'!

As well as beginning to be engaged in the labour market and training in Sheffield (where the refugees are now at the end of their one year support programme) there are also indications that they are becoming increasingly self-reliant, setting up their own community support group and applying for local funding for this; volunteering to support other refugees; setting up a performance singing group which is now able to charge a fee for performances; and attending mainstream services.

Partners go beyond the call of duty

Across the board, partners and their staff appear to have worked incredibly hard to make the experience positive. It is clear that partners have invested a great deal in planning their interventions and developing an awareness of need, on occasion going beyond their remit and their organisations' cultures to fit in with the requirements of the programme and the refugees. This is particularly notable considering the generally very short period of time that was available to get services up and running and to train staff. Some examples include:

- JCP in Sheffield arranging for Child Support Agency requirements to be waived to expedite payment of benefit.
- Sheffield Primary Care Trust arranging 2 dental clinic sessions specifically for the groups.
- Housing support officer in Bolton arranging for refugees to attend a money management course.
- Partners in Bolton arranging a welcome reception for the refugees.

Several partners also commented how satisfying and inspirational their staff found working on the programme, identifying with the humanitarian angle, and pleased to be involved in offering opportunities for refugees who have faced such difficult circumstances to re-build their lives. The 'certainties' of the programme, that everyone knew what was happening for their clients, was also motivating and helped develop quality interventions.

GPP as a model of good practice

Many contributors to the evaluation highlighted the "ripple effect" that delivering the Programme has had in positively influencing the approach to all refugee services. For example, in Bolton, the Primary Care Trust is using the opportunity that GPP presents to combine funding sources to establish a dedicated refugee/asylum seeker health team that can act as a specialist resource for the whole group – not just those settling through GPP – and achieving cost efficiencies. This is enabling the Programme to become "the standard" for all refugee services which is highly likely to drive up quality across the board. This type of good practice development is particularly impressive given the fact that some personnel and partners were "completely new to the refugee field" and have managed to travel a tremendous distance in a very short period time. One Housing Association has taken GPP as an opportunity to get involved with housing provision for refugees and asylum seekers and may continue to develop this.

Another interesting example of bold piloting leading is the experience of establishing the refugee school in Bolton. The words of one contributor reflected the feelings of many in saying that, "although it felt risky" because of the potential for it to be seen as excluding refugee children, so far the school has been seen as a success in helping children to integrate into mainstream education. The effectiveness of this approach has led to plans for a permanent school to be created for **all international** children newly arrived in Bolton. Positive links are also developing between the school and the neighbouring community.

Several organisations commented that the new partnerships that they have established to deliver GPP has enabled them to "develop other really good partnership work on the back of it", indicating that the Programme has created synergy and added value even in its early stages.

These examples of good practice represent just a few of the key developments that have taken place in the relatively short period of time in which the Programme has been running. This highlights the significant potential of GPP as a test bed for piloting innovative resettlement and integration techniques which can help to inform other planned developments, for example, the Sunrise pilots. This builds on the tradition established through other programmes, such as the Kosovo and Bosnian initiatives, to utilise the significant body of experience and expertise as well as to be bold in breaking new ground.

Information sharing is crucial

A final area that is worth commenting on is the sharing of information between delivery partners. In Sheffield it was generally felt that the refugee information received by the different partners was a good tool in planning services. The records received via IOM, with additional information from IRC and Migrant Helpline had all been considered to have been very helpful in terms of planning accommodation etc. The client held medical records produced by IOM was considered by one partner as a 'model of good practice'.

In Bolton there was a slightly different view, with a number of partners commenting that information was sometimes insufficient, inaccurate or out of date. For example, information about some family units that were reported to want to live together was contradicted by the reality that they had never lived together as one family unit and would prefer to live in smaller units. This caused difficulties for housing providers who had gone to a great deal of effort to find suitable accommodation that then had to be changed. Health information also was mentioned in taking a long time to arrive.

There was also some concern expressed in Bolton that different aspects of information on the refugees (eg: health, education etc.), which would have been very helpful in planning services and providing appropriate support were being held by partners and not shared, causing some tension. Clearly, client confidentiality must be observed, but it would be useful for partners to explore ways in which information can be shared more effectively, as part of the wider work to continue the development of partner relationships. The experience gained in Sheffield could be drawn on where appropriate.

Learning from experience

As mentioned earlier, whilst most services and support appear to have worked well, some small gaps in provision were reported including work on citizenship, specialist work with children and parenting support. In addition, there are some minor, yet important areas that may benefit from development, modification or strengthening, including:

ESOL provision: It is generally acknowledged that for the majority of refugees generally ESOL provision is a major issue in terms of facilitating social and economic integration. On the Programme whilst ESOL classes were available, some contributors commented that the provision is not always at the required range of levels, particularly higher levels and not sufficient vocationally-focused ESOL. Given the interest of refugees in securing work at an early stage, addressing this issue is important and also is crucial in preventing long term under-employment. Some contributors also questioned whether or not Jobcentre Plus providers were best placed to meet all the specialist ESOL needs of refugees. There were also indications of inadequate access to ESOL for those refugees with childcare commitments and those with disabilities and/or restricted mobility.

- *Partners should consider reviewing ESOL provision in terms of how it could match the varying needs of refugees more closely, including having ESOL classes with childcare and travel support. It may help for local partnerships to work more closely with ESOL specialists from local colleges or other providers and include specialist material and approaches which have been designed specifically for refugees.*

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) on learning and work opportunities: There is evidence of assumptions being made that the refugees would generally be looking for fairly low skilled work due to lack of skills. However, some refugees in Bolton did appear to have higher level education, qualifications and experience that were not being recognised, and case workers were also concerned that the refugees' aspirations should not be capped. Amongst the refugees themselves, there appeared to be a lack of knowledge of learning and employment options, and many of the refugees were very keen to get more IAG. The refugees in Bolton however are at a fairly early stage in terms of settlement, and this may well be part of the support planned over the coming months.

- *Regular IAG sessions should be delivered by qualified IAG staff with specialist knowledge of working with refugees, including processes for recognition and adaptation of qualifications.*
- *JCP staff should have greater involvement in the regular ongoing meetings of the local partnership. This may also be an opportunity for the specialist work with refugees that JCP and DWP are instigating nationally, to have a particular focus on the GPP areas.*

Budgeting: The refugees found the information they were given about managing money and what it was like to live on a restricted budget in the UK helpful. However, handling bills and managing money was reported by many in Bolton as a continuing challenge, confirmed by various staff. The cost of travel was mentioned as a real concern with some confusion

over entitlement to free bus passes. Again, the challenges of taking on responsibility for budgeting may reflect the relatively early stages that the Bolton refugees are at, but clearly some strengthening of this aspect in the orientation and ongoing support sessions would be helpful. One example was the 'Quids in' money management course that the housing support officer had arranged for some to attend in Bolton.

- *There should be an increased emphasis at pre-arrival and early arrival stages on managing money and what it is like to live on a restricted budget in the UK, which would also help with managing expectations.*

Income and benefits: Whilst access to many benefits appears to have been handled quickly and efficiently, Child Tax credits was mentioned by several partners as a particularly problematic area and delays around this led to extended periods when the refugees were considerably poorer and this was seen as hampering their integration. In addition, there is evidence that some refugees didn't understand the entitlement rules of the benefits system, causing some to see it as unfair when some received different amounts of money, and also resulting in anxieties about what happens to entitlement after the year spent on the GPP. In Bolton, the Citizens Advice Bureau is now involved in running surgeries for the refugees which will help address this. JCP involvement appears to have been mainly focused on the initial arrival phase, and it is not clear that the pivotal role of this agency has been fully realised or incorporated into local partnership working.

- *On-going information about the benefits system should continue to be provided to refugees to avoid misunderstandings and reduce anxieties about the future.*
- *Representatives from the Inland Revenue should be involved at the initial benefit claim stage to help overcome the difficulties with Child Tax Credit*
- *The issue of Tax Credits should also be raised at national Programme level, perhaps through Inland Revenue involvement in the Steering Group.*
- *Partnership working with JCP should be further developed and JCP encouraged to play a more ongoing role in the local partnerships.*

Family reunion: Direct feedback from the refugees in Bolton, and discussions with partners including RIAP and the Home Office confirmed that this remains a live issue of great concern, and a source of tension and distress. Through what could be determined in the course of the evaluation, when refugees are identified for the GPP, they are asked to list other relatives that they would wish to come to the UK. From discussions it appears that many do not do this accurately, as rumours abound in the camps that refugees may have more chance of being selected onto the programme if their family is small and that it is better to 'sort things out later'. It is clearly problematic for resettlement areas to have higher numbers of refugees than were expected. This situation also undermines a key benefit of the GPP – the planning advantage of knowing how many people are to be resettled – a particularly important 'selling point' if additional Local Authorities are to sign up to the programme. The Home Office family reunion policy is currently awaited.

- *The Home Office family reunion policy should be produced as soon as possible to avoid further misunderstanding and diffuse tension.*
- *The information and orientation that is given at the very early stages in the refugee camps should reflect the new UK policy accurately to ensure that refugees have realistic expectations about family reunion.*

Expectations: Some partners commented that some refugees and their caseworkers had very high expectations of the level of services they could expect to receive from partners and agencies. For example, one refugee was shocked to learn that there would be a waiting list for an operation. Where this is an issue, it appears to be due in part to case workers eager to do their best for their clients, but may also reflect on pre-arrival and initial orientation briefings.

- *Refugee and case worker expectations should be proactively addressed in partnership meetings and liaison.*
- *Pre-arrival orientation and ongoing briefings should be reviewed and developed where appropriate to ensure that sufficient focus is put on 'reality checking' the refugees' expectations.*

Home Office Papers: Several refugees and partners expressed concern that the refugees' Home Office ID papers were not widely recognised by organisations such as banks, and some of the refugees expressed fear about whether or not the police would recognise the papers if they were ever asked to produce them. It was felt that the papers themselves didn't appear "official enough" and that agencies and businesses were not aware of what they were, and therefore were suspicious of them.

- *Some further consideration should be given to the design of papers and how major institutions and government agencies are made aware of them.*

Single refugees: Discussions with the refugees in Bolton identified that there may be a tendency for support to be particularly focused on families, with single people receiving less attention, and their needs particularly around loneliness and isolation not fully addressed.

- *Steps should be taken to ensure that Programme staff from all agencies have an awareness of the needs of single people as well as families.*

What are the structural and functional issues?

Whilst the Programme is clearly delivering appropriate and effective services for those refugees who have been resettled, there are a number of challenging issues about the overall structure and function of the Programme, including the:

- ◆ reluctance of Local Authorities to become involved in the Programme;
- ◆ intermittent 'flow' and lower than expected number of refugees arriving, and
- ◆ cost of the programme and 'heavy' infrastructure in relation to its current volume of clients.

Stages within the structure

In general, the overall structure of the Programme in terms of its various stages, and how they fit together to provide a cohesive service, appears effective. It is clear that the structure was intended to support a significantly higher number of refugees than have actually been resettled. The partnership issues raised by this situation are discussed in the following section of the report, but in terms of **service delivery**, the structure and range of services offered to support longer-term **resettlement** are appropriate and appear to work well, with some minor areas of suggested development that would be expected for a pilot programme. That said, discussions have highlighted some issues for the pre-arrival and initial orientation stages that are worth considering to inform the continuing development of the Programme.

Recent research, good practice from similar UK programmes and the experience of GPP to date underline the crucial importance of **pre-arrival orientation** in managing expectations and preparing refugees for resettlement. Up to the present, the pre-arrival orientation has been carried out by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). A strength of the IRC intervention was that links were made between pre-arrival preparation, the immediate arrival orientation (by Migrant Helpline) and the subsequent ongoing resettlement support, so that key messages and information were consistent and built on from stage to stage. RIAP was also noted as having played a helpful role in this regard. Contributors also felt that there was further untapped potential for joint production of materials and streamlining to increase quality and cost effectiveness.

For the next cohort of refugees arriving in May, the pre-arrival orientation will be carried out by IOM. Some anxieties have been expressed about the need to establish new working relationships, and it would be helpful to assess the impact of this change and any benefits that might result. That said, there are some key principles for this stage of the process, regardless of which organisation is delivering it:

- The **quality** of the pre-arrival orientation is crucial in terms of the success of the overall resettlement process and managing refugees' expectations.
- Having **good working links** in place between the different agencies from pre-arrival stage, to immediate arrival and longer term resettlement support is important to ensure that the key messages and information are consistent, built on and reinforced, and that information can be shared and customised for cost efficiency.
- To maximise quality and **consistency**, and also achieve value for money there could be advantages in having one organisation, or a partnership, delivering both the pre-arrival and immediate arrival orientation and this could be tested out, although it may difficult to find organisations with the necessary international and national structures.

Where the **initial reception and orientation** stage takes place and who should deliver it has been the subject of much discussion from the outset. The agencies involved in this stage are undoubtedly very experienced in reception work and highlighted the importance of this stage in allowing for refugees to rest after a long journey and having time to adjust, as well as enabling any immediate health problem to be picked up. Refugee opinion was divided about whether these services should be offered at the initial 'port of entry' i.e. London, or at their final destination. Generally, partners in the resettlement area felt that refugees should come directly into regional airports and be met by their caseworkers and other local representatives.

If this option was taken up, the initial reception could be carried out in a local hotel or other suitable reception centre, providing an opportunity for the group to 'acclimatise' as well as for the vital arrival orientation to take place. It could also be beneficial for the resettlement partner agencies to meet the clients at this early stage to begin the process of assessing their needs, and updating and amending information which would help with planning of services. Value for money factors would need to be checked out.

Whilst the initial reception and orientation could be delivered by a variety of organisations and in local locations, it should be emphasised that RAP and Migrant Helpline clearly offer a high quality service through staff that are committed to working in partnership, and this was commented on favourably, including by the refugees themselves. Indeed RAP and or Migrant Helpline may still have a role to play in any alternative arrangements. It also may be the case that flexibility of provision may be required, with some cohorts going directly to regional airports and some arriving via the Heathrow route and requiring services from RAP and Migrant Helpline.

Building the local foundations

A major reason for the GPP's lower than anticipated number of refugees is the lack of available resettlement areas. This is a key issue that must be resolved if the Programme is to reach its agreed quota.

Approaching Local Authorities at an early stage (before missions are confirmed with UNHCR) to find out which refugee groups would 'fit' into their local communities would not only inform the Home Office's early discussions with UNHCR, but also give the regions ownership in deciding the appropriate number and ethnic origin of groups to optimise integration and social cohesion. Linking incoming refugee groups with communities of the same ethnic origin may not always be possible given the exigencies of the programme, but giving the **potential** to Local Authorities to inform the early negotiations with the UNHCR could give them greater confidence in participating.

If this was done sufficiently well in advance, resettlement could be written into Local Authorities plans, particularly housing plans, since "*more time for planning*" was seen by several partners as helpful. Greater specialist knowledge of housing issues at the heart of the programme would also assist, since the procurement of suitable housing is so crucial to the programme's ability to meet its objectives. Involvement from the ODPM on the steering group should be considered.

Using the established structures and experience of the regional refugee and asylum seeker consortia might also galvanise local buy-in to GPP. The potential for linking negotiations on GPP to those for NASS that is currently being considered may also be useful in promoting the benefits of signing up to planned resettlement.

The flow is slow

The absolute necessity of getting more Local Authorities to join the Programme is a given if GPP is to maximise its potential. However, a number of contributors also highlighted the apparent difficulties in bringing refugees to the UK for resettlement. Clearly, there is no shortage of refugees. The limitations of this evaluation prevent full examination of the issues, but some concerns were raised that may be helpful to explore further, to ensure that as the 'supply' side (Local Authorities) for the Programme is stimulated, the 'demand' side (refugees) does not lag behind. This situation would only cause further undermining of confidence amongst partners and could potentially threaten the positive image of the Programme.

Value for money

The programme is under considerable pressure to reduce costs and there have been recent cuts including the withdrawal of all of the funding for the Resettlement Interagency Team. With the number of refugees less than expected, the 'unit' cost per refugees on the programme is higher, and the partnership structures that were originally set up now can appear inappropriate and costly.

Whilst seeking value for money will always be an ongoing imperative, it is also important to identify where spending actually saves money in the round. The upfront investment on GPP in orientation and support is undoubtedly a key factor in the positive integration of the refugees and has led to the relatively straightforward process and the '*low and appropriate demand*'

on services' that the refugees quite shortly are making on local services. As well as delivering a quality service that the UK can be proud of, the approach will also reap economies in the long run, and this is particularly the case when considering demand on emergency services and in promoting community cohesion.

Making a straightforward arithmetical case for this is not simple, but discussions revealed a range of cases where the spending was undoubtedly an insurance against future higher costs. For example, quality interpretation in the provision of health services was essential in engaging the required number of GPs, and increased the likelihood of early reliable diagnosis, avoiding unnecessarily referrals or use of emergency services. Similarly, good pre and post arrival orientation and case worker support reduced the need for crisis interventions. Achieving a level of integration also meant that refugees would be financial independent at an earlier stage and making a contribution to the local economy.

The question has been raised of whether or not a similar package of resettlement services can be delivered at a lower price. This may be tested out when and if further Local Authorities wish to approach delivery differently. Given the apparent pressures on budgets it would also seem important to review value for money factors for all stages in the process. Other suggestions made by contributors around value for money included reducing new setting up costs by 're-using' locations where possible, and prioritising efforts to expand local authority involvement to those authorities neighbouring existing GPP areas. Teams would not need to double in size and there would be economies of scale and growth of capacity, skills and experience, all of which would contribute positively to achieving value for money.

A further cost issue, particularly in view of the less regular flow of refugee groups arriving, is accommodating flexibility within the programme. Commissioning or contracting with agencies as and when required may have some financial benefit. On the other hand, consistent quality standards require agencies to have programme knowledge and skilled staff, and it is difficult to switch this on and off. While the number of refugees on the programme is low there may be some financially prudent ways of securing partners' continuing interest in the programme and complementing this with additional contracts for the delivery of specific services for particular groups.

Utilising existing refugee and asylum seekers structures would also have benefits, avoiding the cost of maintaining separate structures. It was reported earlier how funding via the GPP can be linked with other sources to fund general services for refugees and asylum seekers. There are some fears that within such an arrangements the needs of the GPP refugees, which are different from others, may then not be met, and the successes and achievements of the programme as noted in this report are then lost. This would need to be carefully monitored. Also there may not be sufficient refugee integration services established as yet to make this viable.

A partnership approach

The delivery of GPP is being achieved through a multi-agency approach that demonstrates a number of good partnership principles, but is clearly still in a process of change. The approach draws on previous experience in successfully delivering other programmes and seeks to maximise the contribution that different agencies can make to supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the world to re-establish their lives. The evaluation has identified partnership working on three levels – the 'local' levels for delivery in Sheffield and Bolton; the Regional Stakeholder Group level and the 'London-focused' UK strategic level that includes RIAP and the Home Office. There are strong links between these, with some individuals participating in partnership groups at all levels.

Local partnerships are effective

In terms of partnership working at a local level, the evaluation identified positive partnerships in the resettlement areas. The lead partner for the provision of resettlement services in Sheffield and Bolton are respectively the Refugee Council and Refugee Action. This reflects and builds on arrangements under other previous and current programmes and has significant advantages in that it benefits from existing knowledge of the area and partnership working with key agencies.

In both areas a similar model exists with the lead partners providing the individual assessment, orientation and ongoing case worker support, as well as overall responsibility for integration and coordinating the local partnership. For both, the provision of housing and housing support is subcontracted out, in the case of Sheffield to Safe Haven Housing Association and in Bolton, to the local authority.

The local delivery partnerships in Bolton and Sheffield are effective in providing good quality services that are really making a difference to the refugees settling in these areas, as is reflected in the delivery section above. Initial teething difficulties appear to have largely been overcome and in both locations, statutory and not-for-profit organisations appear to have, on the whole, good relationships of trust and provide an excellent range of expertise, as well as significant levels of commitment. Local partnership meetings seem well established and there also seems to be regular and supportive informal contact between partners. Not only is this a key factor in the delivery successes but is also important in *"driving things forward"*. One respondent also felt that there was *"demonstrable evidence that the local group has averted crises"* and another that *"through discussion we got things sorted out."*

Some areas which may benefit from attention include clarifying any overlap between the case worker and housing support worker role and addressing information sharing issues between partners in Bolton. In both locations JCP do not attend meetings on an ongoing basis and in Bolton there appears to be difficulties in securing the attendance at meetings by the education partners. A number of practitioners' commented that it would *be "really helpful if we could meet at practitioner level, so that we can iron out day-to-day issues that arise"*.

As mentioned earlier, there are links between the local level partnerships and RIAP which again largely appear to work well in supporting the delivery of the Programme. However, the *"original allocation of regions to RIAP organisations"* has meant that whilst there has been a degree of involvement, some local voluntary sector organisations have not been able to help deliver the programme. In the case of Bolton, these organisations already had a presence and were working with refugee groups and the Local Authority. Whilst there is general satisfaction with the way in which the RIAP partner organisation is delivering services, it has had to establish a new office in Bolton, and there is a feeling that *"it would have been really helpful to have been able to involve our more local groups who were already here"*. A not dissimilar situation existed in Sheffield where there was local interest in delivering some of the community development and volunteering work and other partners felt that it would have been good to secure the involvement of local voluntary and community groups.

This should be borne in mind for future local partnership arrangements, so that the best use can be made of existing resources and relationships, especially with voluntary sector organisations. It is important to remember though that so far the Programme has been working as a pilot. The urgent need was to get things up and running initially and using larger organisations and established relationships undoubtedly helped with this. As the Programme develops however and becomes more established in local areas with regular flows of new groups, increasingly local voluntary and community groups could take on responsibility, possibly with agencies such as the Refugee Council and Refugee Action acting more in a capacity building and support function.

Currently, formal representation of local partnerships at national Programme level is through the lead voluntary sector agency, i.e. Refugee Action and Refugee Council. Amongst the **local** partners there were differences of opinions on how important it was that they had formal representation and involvement at the programme management level, some arguing strongly for it, and others content with the current arrangement. The important points are that the structure needs to be clear and workable, and this latter point is important in terms of accommodating the hoped for future expansion of the number of resettlement areas. A further consideration is that if Welsh and Scottish Local Authorities come on board, the different devolved responsibilities will also need to be accommodated.

Expanding the local partnership base

In the course of negotiating the involvement of various Local Authorities, a clear concern of the Home Office has been to avoid imposing a 'one type suits all' model for local partnership. Securing the involvement of Local Authorities is absolutely essential to the programme's continuation and expansion and having a 'mixed economy' within the programme with different

models and lead partners may bring financial benefits. It also seems sensible to make the best use of the existing local partnership arrangements and experience.

Such consideration points to the continued involvement of voluntary sector expertise. Voluntary sector contributors were quick to point out the importance they place on securing the involvement of more Local Authorities and their acceptance of a mixed economy approach. As the Programme develops, a possible role for experienced agencies such as those in the RIAP could be to build the capacity of and 'mentor' other agencies to enable them to deliver where appropriate. This is a similar role played by the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, the British Red Cross and the Scottish Refugee Council in the second phase of the Kosovan programme and there may be some useful experience to be gleaned from that experience.

The **Regional Stakeholder Groups** enable regional housing providers, Local Authorities, voluntary sector leads and the Home Office to meet. This forum was noted by one respondent as having been of critical value in its fast response at the beginning of the programme. It is also the one place where the 'triangle' of the Home Office, voluntary sector and Local Authorities meet, yet this level of partnership does not appear in descriptions of the Gateway structure. As a regional approach becomes more important, and the Regional Refugee and Asylum Seekers Consortia play an increasingly key role, this level of partnership working may take on a more prominent role.

Programme Level partnership

The **Home Office GPP Steering Group** meets bimonthly and brings together a range of partners, including some from RIAP partners but also officers from other government departments such as DWP. Home Office research designed to further inform and develop GPP is also fed into this group and is met with a "*receptive and positive*" response from all partners, particularly voluntary sector partners. The terms of reference for the steering group were not available but it is seen as a forum when all the key partners in the programme can be brought together to pool knowledge, report, raise issues and be updated. Its role and responsibilities in terms of strategic and operational coordination or programme management however were not clear. With the withdrawal of funding of RIAT and the likelihood of a new Operational Development Adviser post at the Home Office, this steering group may take on more prominence and it would be important if the purpose, status and membership of this group are made clear. For the group to be functional the numbers attending needs to be manageable though it also would be important to clarify how all the key partners within the Programme are represented: - such as the local authorities; the local delivery partnerships and RIAP. It would also be helpful to complement the Steering Group meetings with occasional larger partnership events and monthly e-briefings for interested parties. This would ensure that information is accurately and properly circulated and promote openness and common purpose within the Programme.

RIAP and programme level partnership

A key issue arising from the evaluation is the role and purpose of RIAP within GPP. How the partnership was first established is fairly complex. The original 'version' of RIAP included the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, British Red Cross, Scottish Refugee Council and the Refugee Housing Association, which responded to the initial call for expression of interests to deliver services in this programme. As well as contracting with RIAP, the Home Office subsequently contracted with Refugee Arrivals Project and Migrant Helpline to deliver reception and orientation services and these two organisations subsequently joined an expanded RIAP. The International Rescue Committee came on board after becoming involved in the pre-arrival cultural orientation and information stage.

RIAP's membership is drawn from "*not for profit agencies that have a record of successful work with asylum seekers and refugees*" and it has underpinning principles around commitment to key things such as active host community participation, provision geared to the needs of refugees and partnership based on an assumption of cooperation and trust. The partnership includes a mix of agencies delivering services as well as those such as the Red Cross and Refugee Housing Association that are not currently involved in direct delivery.

Despite it being an '*arranged*' partnership, it is clear that amongst the RIAP agencies there are very high levels of commitment to work together to deliver a coherent and effective programme of support for refugees. Many partners have a

"history of working in close collaboration" which has benefited the partnership, and there is also *"an impressive pool of expertise and experience"* which is a further success factor for the Programme. RIAP members report many positive aspects of partnership, including encouraging organisations to pull together, sharing and pooling of knowledge and combating isolation in what can be a challenging area of work. It was seen as a useful place to talk through differences and *"trash things out at an early stage before they became sticky"*, as well as being a principled alliance with extensive experience of community development and refugee integration. It was also seen as a forum for bringing consistency and connectivity into the programme's various stages.

Selection of delivery partners

A number of contributors remarked that the criteria and rationale behind the selection of partners and their geographical areas of operation were not widely understood or clear, leading to tensions, particularly where original members of RIAP are still not able to deliver in their 'given' region due to the absence of Local Authority involvement in their 'allocated region'. The way in which partners have been selected, which reflects previous patterns of activity was likened by some to a *"geographical carve up"*. An alternative way of looking at this is to see a programme trying to play to the strengths of the likely key partners and where different agencies have particularly strong connections and experience in specific regions it makes sense to build on this and optimise the opportunities. Whatever view is taken the issue nonetheless has undoubtedly caused some difficulty within the partnership and more widely within the programme.

To ensure that the Programme is expanded on solid foundations, a clear rationale and consistent criteria for selecting new delivery partners is required. The Active Communities Unit guide to good practice on Procurement from the Voluntary and Community Sector may provide some help in terms of a protocol for selection and recruitment of future partners, but this will need to be set within the wider context of how the partnership approach should develop. Of course, the most urgent need in terms of new partners is the Local Authorities, without which it will not be possible for the Programme to reach its target of refugees.

Understanding roles

Within the GPP overall, the roles of organisations in the actual **delivery** of services for refugees appear to be clear. However, the roles of managing, co-ordinating, planning and developing the Programme are not clearly delineated. Looking at various descriptions of the role, responsibilities and functions of RIAP, and consequently also of the Home Office, a striking feature is that they vary significantly across internal and external GPP documents. It also appears to be the case that different partners also have varying *perceptions* about RIAP's role. This ranges from RIAP being seen as 'a partnership of the key voluntary sector refugee agencies who are delivering some of the activity under the Gateway Programme', to regarding it as having 'overall responsibility for the management of resettlement'.

It may be that differing assumptions about the level of and nature of the involvement of the voluntary sector are being made on the basis of past programmes such as the Bosnian and Kosovan programmes, which were referred to by a wide range of contributors in the course of the evaluation. In the absence of real clarity on this point, RIAP and the Home Office both appear to see management and programme development responsibilities as part of their remit. Whilst the perceived differences of the role of RIAP and the Home Office can be quite subtle, often just a matter of emphasis, the effect has been to fuel confusion and some of the tensions around the partnership and programme.

The confusion over roles becomes even more complex when contracting arrangements are considered. Currently, there are direct funding, contractual and 'general' relationships between partners (local and London) and the Home Office which are quite appropriate for the contractual management of programme delivery, but which create a complex and confused picture about what the partnership relationships are really about. For example, programme monitoring information is provided direct from delivery organisations to the Home Office, not through RIAP, yet RIAP sees itself as having a management role in developing and delivering GPP. Partners' direct funding relationships with the Home Office also means that there are none of the advantages of having 'one point of contact' for handling and co-ordinating contracts.

A particularly significant example of the lack of clarity and agreement about who should take the lead in Programme development is the issue of whose role it is, or should be, to engage prospective Local Authority partners in discussions and negotiations about participating in the Programme. A number of contributors echoed the need to *"set out a joint strategy between the voluntary sector and the Home Office"* so that the approach to Local Authorities is coherent and consistent. This underlines the acknowledgement that lack of clear roles is one of the 'sticking points' that may prevent the Programme from reaching its full potential. Whichever organisation is to conduct discussions with a given Local Authority, this should be agreed at an early stage before the Local Authority is approached, to alleviate the current situation of uncertainty and tension that may seriously undermine the programme if it continues.

Information flow and staff continuity

The difficulties caused by unclear roles can and does lead to reluctance to being completely open, particularly where partners (voluntary sector and Home Office) may be concerned about sharing information that is perceived as sensitive or open to interpretation. The free flow of information is crucial if relationships of trust are to continue to be built – between voluntary sector partners and between them and the Home Office. Many contributors to the evaluation stressed the importance of *"trust and openness"* between all key players in the programme. Whilst all acknowledged that there were many good examples of this, there was also a strong feeling there is still a significant way to go to achieve this fully.

Building relationships of trust does not only rely on being clear about partner roles and responsibilities, but also upon having continuity of personnel. Unfortunately, there is fairly frequent movement of staff in the Home Office, which can make it difficult to establish effective communication on which to build trust. There was a strong hope expressed that the staff now in place will continue in post to allow relationships to develop to their optimum.

Competition or collaboration?

Competition between partners is a normal feature of all sectors, including the voluntary and community sector. One of the points regularly noted by partners however was that they were unsure on what the basis the Programme was operating on since it seemed that it is *"promoting competition but expecting collaboration"*.

Finding ways for the competition to be appropriate and productive is an important challenge for the Programme, especially around ensuring best value for money. However, collaboration should be encouraged whenever possible, to ensure that energies are not wasted in unnecessary tendering exercises which take focus away from needs of refugees and their successful integration. It is in this vein that the clarity of selection of partners, roles and responsibilities and communication of information become strikingly important. The evaluation highlighted many examples of successful collaboration and recognition of how each others involvement fitted in with each other and this should be further encouraged including ensuring clarity around roles and contracting arrangements.

The advocacy function

RIAP not only provides a forum for delivery organisations and other partners to meet and exchange information and best practice about the delivery of services, but also acts as an advocacy mechanism to report to the Home Office and other interested agencies on how RIAP feels the Programme should develop in the best interests of refugees. Both these functions are valuable; however, as is the case with many similar programmes that operate in highly sensitive, 'political' and emotive areas of work, it is sometimes a challenge to combine delivery and advocacy roles.

The partnership's function in sharing good practice and providing 'practitioner-based' feedback to the Home Office is clearly helpful in ensuring that the Programme maintains a sharp focus on benefiting refugees. The *"advocacy role of the partnership needs to be recognised"*, but it should also be acknowledged that if this role is remain part of the remit of RIAP, there may be 'pinch points' in the implementation of Government policy which will require diplomatic and imaginative resolution for *"positive engagement"* if the skills and experience of all partners are to be put to best use.

It may be helpful to refer to the Government's document on the Compact with the Voluntary and Community Sector in reviewing how some of the working relationships between RIAP and the Home Office could be further strengthened. In

addition, drawing up a brief partnership agreement between RIAP and the Home Office, clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of each party could help to maximise partnership working.

Evolving roles and relationships

In terms of looking to the future, clearly there are other alternative models for delivering GPP which could be adopted and it may be worth exploring these, not least as a way of stimulating future thinking on the programme and drawing out key issues. In the meantime however the Home Office have assumed much of the direct responsibility of managing the programme. GPP is in its pilot phase, and is very different from previous programmes in that it represents the Government's commitment to long-term refugee resettlement, as opposed to short-term emergency responses. The voluntary sector partners clearly have the expertise and ability to manage GPP, but this may not be the most cost-effective approach whilst the programme is currently small scale. In addition, it is understandable that, given the political importance and sensitivity of GPP and other negotiations, for example, NASS contracts, the Home Office may wish to take a stronger management role, at least until the programme is fully established.

It is now expected that a new Operational Development Adviser post will be established at the Home Office and partners invited to nominate possible secondees. The precise nature of this post is so far not clear though it is expected that it will be key in terms of boosting the Programme's capacity to engage with Local Authorities and the wider voluntary sector. It will also be important that the crucial role that RIAT played in providing information to the partnership should not be lost. When details of the post are finalised they should be communicated clearly to all partners so that there is no ambiguity about responsibilities.

At this stage many RIAP partners may "*not be convinced*" about how realistic it is to manage all aspects of the programme via a small team at the Home Office, and there is concern that "*independence will be lost*" and there is "*not the programme management capacity*". That said in seeking out a realistic way forward, RIAP should try to put concerns aside and focus on how best it can operate under the new arrangements. As with all work involving refugees and asylum seekers, having a strong coherent voluntary sector input into policy and delivery is beneficial for the programme because "*they are absolutely the ones that champion the needs of clients*", and an important task which RIAP now needs to tackle is to consider how to achieve this most effectively.

As the new arrangements become clearer and bed down, RIAP will need to review and consider a number of issues. These include: -

- What added value does RIAP provide, above the sum of its parts?
- What value does it provide for the RIAP agencies who currently are not in receipt of funding and do not have a delivery role?
- What is the contribution that having one voluntary sector voice can bring to the programme? And how realistic is it to have one voice, giving the diversity of agencies involved?
- How can the partnership be maintained on a 'voluntary' basis – and do partners have the capacity and desire for this? What would it entail?
- How can good relations with the new Operational Development Adviser be developed that would best support RIAP's involvement in the programme; and
- How can partners best collaborate and support each other through the challenges and celebrate successes.

For the effectiveness of the new arrangements to be optimised, the Home Office also should consider how it can build trust and confidence with the partners. Making significant changes to programmes is often more challenging work than launching new initiatives and requires skilful handling to ensure that the anticipated benefits are realised.

Principles for moving forward

Underpinning principles for success

In evaluating the Programme, a number of key success factors have emerged which are important in underpinning the Programme and they can be summarised as:

- **Clarity of roles:** Resettlement programmes have been delivered through a variety of models in the UK, and there are also a range of different models currently in use internationally. These models show that an underpinning element for success and cost effectiveness is the **clear and precise** identification of roles and remits for **all** of the partners involved – Government Departments (in this case the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), voluntary and community sector organisations, housing associations, Local Authorities and any other bodies including faith groups and the private sector. As highlighted earlier, this is a particularly key issue for GPP.
- **Trust and openness:** This underpinning principle has been problematic for GPP in some areas. That said, all contributors stressed the importance of developing relationships of trust, built on openness and a commitment to share information. For this to be successful, **all** partners (voluntary sector and Governmental) need to feel safe to explore issues, some of which may be contentious or sensitive, in the knowledge that they will be supported to find the best possible solutions for refugees within the limitations of finance and other considerations.
- **Local Authority support at all levels:** evidence from the successes of Sheffield and Bolton, as well as difficulties encountered in Birmingham, indicate that *“political support and buy-in from the top is essential”* to create the right conditions for successfully establishing the Programme. Even where Council departments are committed, if *“the political will and conditions aren’t right, it just won’t happen”*.
- **Knowledge of refugee needs:** alongside Local Authority support, the expertise, knowledge and experience of voluntary sector organisations and others such as Local Authority refugee and asylum teams is absolutely essential to the Programme’s success. Ensuring that every stage of the Programme has the right combination and balance of organisations is vital. This requires a flexible approach to involving organisations, underpinned by a firm set of guiding principles and criteria, enabling the right model for each set of local conditions to be developed.
- **A real commitment to partnership:** the Programme clearly would not have achieved what it has without a very real commitment on the part of a whole range of agencies and organisations to work together. This commitment has not only enabled a coherent package of support to be provided for refugees, but has also led to enhanced working practices in many instances, particularly in overcoming teething difficulties and tensions in the operation of the Programme in the regions.
- **Positive and well-managed publicity:** successfully establishing the Programme is *“as much about winning hearts and minds”* as putting in place the practical support that refugees require. Carefully managed and positive press is clearly crucial to this, and Local Authorities understandably wish to have control, particularly of local press. The experience so far indicates that there have been some tensions around who should manage press and publicity, but these have been addressed and good working arrangements arrived at to handle local and national publicity. This has been particularly challenging but well handled, in the run up to the general election, with some very positive stories about the contributions that refugees are making.
- **An appropriate housing solution:** unsurprisingly, the high priority placed on housing was a continuing theme throughout the evaluation. It is clearly the single most important element of practical support that refugees require to resettle. The pressure on housing varies across the country, but is a sensitive and highly-charged issue in most areas. It has become clear that having the flexibility to find locally tailored housing solutions is highly important – both in practical terms and in winning the support of local populations. Again, a range of solutions including council, housing association

and private rented stock have been used so far. It is important that local delivery partnerships are able to develop the best solution for their area – taking into account availability of housing and other issues – so that housing does not become a potential battleground that may affect local attitudes to the Programme as a whole.

- **Seeing refugee resettlement as part of “regeneration solutions”:** there is a tendency to see refugee resettlement mainly as putting additional pressure on areas that already have difficulties such as poor schools and health services. However, refugee resettlement can and should be seen far more positively *“as part of a solution”*. The financial package provided by the Programme (housing, benefits etc.) helps by bringing in additional funding. This, combined with thorough planning that includes putting mechanisms in place to deal with issues that may arise, for example, difficulties in getting a GP or dentist, will help in promoting community cohesion and renewal.
- **A willingness to be brave and take some risks:** becoming involved in the Programme is clearly a huge political responsibility, particularly for Local Authorities. The real highlights of the Programme are characterised by the risks that partners have been prepared to take, and the positive attitude with which this has been done. On the ground, it has also been clear that developing and piloting new integration methods has also taken courage, but has clearly brought great benefits.
- **Maintaining flexibility, consistency and quality:** flexibility has been highlighted as important, particularly in responding to local conditions. However, whilst there may be some local variables it is important to continue to offer a consistent level and type of service throughout the whole programme. Arrangements should be put into place to carefully monitor and evaluate consistency and quality to ensure that standards are maintained.

The common threads that run through these success factors includes flexibility, commitment to partnership and a highly professional attitude towards making a challenging programme work.

Endnote

GPP has clearly achieved much in its pilot phase and there are solid foundations on which to continue building the Programme. However, there are a number of crucial challenges that will need to be addressed if the Programme is to move forward, the most urgent of which is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Home Office and all other partners, and to address the blockages that are currently preventing more refugees from being resettled.

There is enormous commitment to GPP from all partners, however, for the Programme to really achieve its aims, the needs of refugees should remain central to all future developments. This will entail letting go of past tensions, re-establishing trust in some relationships and putting aside the interests of individual partners so that a clear focus on resettling the some of the most vulnerable people in the world is uppermost.

APPENDIX 1: CHECKLIST FOR ACTION

Structure of the Programme		Lead	✓
General	Look at timing of programme – can there be early local authority input to inform proceedings and allow for planning?		
	Explore ways of raising the profile of housing issues within the programme.		
Pre-arrival orientation	Monitor and assess the impact of any changes to delivery arrangements.		
	Maintain and develop links from pre-arrival orientation to initial arrival orientation and subsequent support, so that each stage builds on the previous one. Review information sharing between stages to see where there are gaps.		
	Look at strengthening content of pre-arrival orientation around expectations and family reunion.		
Initial reception and orientation stage	<p>Review all factors including value for money in relation to refugees going straight to their UK regional destinations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could they fly directly to regional airports? • Can the arrival orientation take place in the regions? 		

Resettlement Stage		Lead	✓
Information sharing	Consider ways in which information sharing between local partners can be improved.		
ESOL provision	Review range of ESOL provision in terms of meeting requirements. Is there a need for higher level and vocationally focused ESOL?		
	Has everyone who needs it got access to ESOL (including those with childcare responsibilities; mobility difficulties)?		
	Develop links with ESOL specialists from local colleges or other providers and encourage them to join local delivery partnership.		
IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance)	Explore possibility of providing more specialist refugee IAG provision including adaptation and recognition of qualifications.		
	Look at ways to encourage Jobcentre Plus staff to attend ongoing local partnership meetings.		
	Would focusing on the GPP areas represent a useful opportunity for the JCP and DWP specialist work with refugees?		

Budgeting	Explore ways to give increased emphasis on money management and living on a budget in the UK.		
Income & Benefits	Ongoing information about the benefits system to refugees, particularly around what happens at the end of GPP.		
	Raise difficulties with Child Tax Credit payments with Inland Revenue. Invite Inland Revenue to attend initial sessions in the regions organised by JCP.		
Family reunion	Policy on family reunion for GPP to be circulated as soon as possible.		
	Briefing to refugees on family reunion strengthened, including at the early stages so there is a clearer understanding of the realities of the issues.		
Expectations	Ongoing discussions within local delivery partnerships around sharing information on refugees' expectations and resolving any difficulties.		
Home office papers	Review format of refugees' Home Office papers and promote greater awareness and familiarity to avoid additional difficulties e.g. when opening bank accounts.		

Programme Partnership Issues		Lead	✓
	GP Steering Group to have clear terms of reference especially in relation to its role around strategic and operational management, and the ways that partners are represented on it.		
	Highlight the roles of the Regional Stakeholders groups within the Programme structures.		
	Consider holding occasional larger GPP partnership events and produce monthly e-briefings.		
	Increase clarity around the selection of delivery partners. Use the Active Communities Unit Guide to Good Practice on Procurement from the Voluntary and Community Sector to support this. Be clear about the basis – competition/collaboration.		
	Use the Compact with the Voluntary and Community Sector in reviewing how some of the working relationships between RIAP and the Home Office could be further strengthened. Consider a partnership agreement.		
	Review internal GPP communication strategy and amend where appropriate.		

Local Partnership Issues		Lead	✓
Strengthening local partnerships	Encourage partners to attend local partnership meetings.		
	Address any difficulties around information sharing between local partners.		
	Review roles where there is any potential overlap between partners or difficulties.		
	Have further discussions with partners regarding refugees' expectations and any difficulties.		
	Set up more opportunities for practitioner level staff from different partner organisations to meet.		
	Consider how to promote the involvement of local voluntary organisations in the delivery of services.		

RIAP		Lead	✓
Reviewing and adapting RIAP to changing circumstances	Partners to jointly consider the added value that RIAP provides. In particular to consider the value for those agencies currently not in receipt of funding.		
	Review and agree the future aims and objectives of RIAP.		
	How can RIAP be maintained on a 'voluntary' basis? What are the expectations of partners? Is there the capacity and desire from partners to continue to be involved in this way? What would it entail?		
	How can partners best collaborate and support each other through the challenges, particularly if RIAP will be run on a non-funded basis for the foreseeable future?		
	Are there ways in which RIAP can be more supported e.g. fundraising for a coordinator? How realistic is this?		
	If/when appropriate, communicate conclusions to Home Office. Try to secure partnership agreement which formally recognises RIAP's continued role in the programme, and a description of what it entails.		
	Consider how to best develop good relations with the new Operational Development Adviser.		

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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APPENDIX 3: KEY QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

The questions below are those that were used as the basis for interviewing respondents to the evaluation. Different combinations of questions were used, and questions phrased slightly differently, adapted or added to, depending on the different role respondents had in the Programme.

1. What do you feel are the key strengths of the Refugee Interagency Partnership?
2. Are there any ways in which you feel the partnership should be strengthened or modified?
3. Do you feel that the partnership is the most effective model for the delivery of the resettlement programme? Why?
4. How well do you feel the partnership fits in with the other structures of the Gateway Protection Programme e.g. Home Office National steering Group?
5. What has been your organisation's involvement in the resettlement programme?
6. What is your impression of its effectiveness in re-settling refugees?
7. What do you feel are its key strengths? What areas do you feel would benefit from strengthening or modification?
8. What is your impression of the role of the Refugee Interagency Partnership in delivering the resettlement programme? What value does it add?
9. How effectively do you think the programme is being coordinated?
10. Do you feel there are any areas of weakness in co-ordination?
11. What do you feel the impact of losing the RIAP coordinator's post will be?
12. What are the contracting and funding arrangements for the various elements of the programme? e.g. housing, education, benefits
13. Are the contracting and funding arrangements effective?
14. Have there been any difficulties in delivering these services?
15. What monitoring and evaluation processes are in place (for individual partners and at programme level)?
16. Do you feel that these processes have been effective in assessing the performance and impact of the programme, and in helping to take it forward (implementation and policy)?
17. How effective do you feel your organisation's contribution to the resettlement programme has been to date?
18. How well do you feel the various partners' activities fit together to form a cohesive service for refugees?
19. Do you feel that the current group of delivery partners is too big, too small or about right? Is the combination of expertise in service delivery right?
20. How does the partnership support your organisation in delivering the programme?
21. Do you use volunteers to support the delivery of your service? How successful/helpful is this?
22. What are the key challenges in delivering your service?
23. Are the RIAP products useful? Are there others that you think would be helpful?
24. Do you think the programme offers value for money? How can this be promoted?

Questions for the refugees

1. What kinds of help have you been offered on the programme?
2. What are the most useful things?
3. What has been unhelpful or not very useful?
4. *Before* you came to the UK, did you understand what was happening to you and what to expect when you arrived in the UK? Was it like you expected it to be?
5. *When you arrived in the UK* did someone explain what would happen to you next – and did you understand? Has this happened– or has it been different?
6. Do you think that things have been well organised for you?
7. What are the most difficult things for you to deal with?
8. Is someone helping you with those?
9. Is there anything else that you think would really help you to settle in the UK?
10. What are your hopes for the future?