



The New Roots Project

Final Evaluation Report

October 2023

"I believe you have to make some changes in yourself when you come to a new place. Every day we are trying to do more things for ourselves. You cannot live in the past. When I left my country I left everything - we had to start again from the beginning. We are making a new life."

New Roots client.

Richard Malfait and Nick Scott Flynn
(Independent Evaluators)

R. Malfait Consultants (RMC) Ltd.

email: r.malfaitconsulting@btinternet.com Telephone: 07808 297859

The project is part-funded through the European Union Asylum Migration Integration Fund.

Making management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union.



SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES



Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Executive summary	4
3. Foreword by Jasmine Evans, National Programme Manager, the New Roots Project.....	8
4. New Roots impact against main targets and outcomes - statistical summary.....	10
5. New Roots impact and difference made - themes in stakeholder feedback.....	12
6. Strengths in project design and delivery	18
7. Challenges and learning in the delivery of New Roots Project	24
8. Stakeholder assessments and suggestions regarding future need and service delivery.....	30
9. Looking back, feeling proud and looking to the future	34
10. Concluding comments	40
Appendix 1 - Methodology	41

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of an impact and learning evaluation of the New Roots Project (also subsequently referred to as 'New Roots' or 'the project'). New Roots is a partnership-based project, led by the Refugee Council and providing holistic integration support for refugees in Leeds, Hull and London. Until January 2023, specialist therapeutic support for refugees was also delivered by the Refugee Council team in Sheffield as part of the project. The project has been delivered for five years and is currently funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) up until December 2023 when the funding will end. New Roots provides holistic support for refugees which is tailored to their individual needs and structured around three broad activity areas: 'Engage' which encompasses 'move on' advice (when a person seeking asylum is granted refugee status), crisis support and immigration advice; 'Connect' which includes activities supporting social integration and 'Aspire' which comprises employability and education support.

In Leeds, the New Roots Project is delivered by the Refugee Council, RETAS and PATH Yorkshire. In Hull, the project is delivered by the Refugee Council in partnership with HCAS and Goodwin Development Trust. In London, New Roots services are delivered by the Refugee Council.

The evaluation of New Roots was commissioned by the Refugee Council in June 2023 and undertaken by two independent consultants, Richard Malfait and Nick Scott-Flynn, who have authored this report. It was completed during the period June to September 2023 as the project approached the end of its AMIF funded delivery. The main aims of the evaluation were to explore the value, impact and strengths of New Roots as a partnership project and also to identify the main learning points from its delivery. It also set out to record some of the experiences and memories of refugees that the New Roots partnership supported as they settled into building new lives with their families in Leeds, Hull, Sheffield and London. Clients, delivery team members and external stakeholders in each New Roots area were invited to share their views on future needs and priorities for partnership managers to consider in future service development and planning processes.

Contributions in the evaluation were made by a combined total of 107 individuals. These included 42 refugees who were clients and supported by the New Roots partnership in its different locations along with 34 employed and voluntary team members from across the partnership organisations. Finally, 31 stakeholders in external organisations also participated in the evaluation by sharing their own feedback and views on the work of New Roots.

Note on report structure

The key findings and stakeholder messages regarding New Root's impact, strengths, learning and their views on future needs were broadly very similar in each service base across the partnership project. The structure of the report is therefore based around our findings under these core evaluation areas (impact, strengths, challenges, learning and future needs). City and partner specific consultation responses have been collated and shared in raw data form as separate appendices with respective partner organisations in order that they can inform local evaluation and planning processes. We have integrated representative examples of client and other stakeholder responses into the evaluation report, drawing from interview notes and online survey responses, but we have not attributed them to named individuals as contributions were given on the condition of anonymity. We hope that these examples help to illustrate the many ways in which the New Roots Project has provided invaluable support for refugees and that they also serve to underline the evaluation findings regarding the effectiveness of and ongoing need for holistic integration support.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to everyone, especially current and former New Roots clients, staff, volunteers and external stakeholders in Hull, Leeds, Sheffield and London, who took the time to share their experiences and perspectives as part of the project evaluation. We would especially like to record our thanks to the volunteer interviewers who helped a number of New Roots clients to participate in the evaluation by talking about their integration experiences, achievements and future goals. Finally, we would also like to acknowledge the commitment that all stakeholders showed towards sharing the learning from their experiences in order to sustain and develop effective integration support for refugees in the future.

2. Executive summary

"I felt safe (when I came here) and was not scared of walking around and being killed for no reason any more. It feels like I have been given a chance. It is 100% much better than my life before. It would be too hard to go back. I can sleep with an open door now. That is what I was missing." New Roots client.

The New Roots Project has provided holistic integration support for more than 6000 refugees and family members in Leeds, Hull, Sheffield and London since the project began in October 2018. The formal delivery partnership made up of the Refugee Council, PATH Yorkshire, RETAS, HCAS and the Goodwin Development Trust, has demonstrated how, with effective coordination, communication and collaboration, organisations can work together not only to meet the immediate needs of resettling refugees but also to support them in achieving their longer term social, educational and employment related goals. Also key to the success of the project has been the development of local, informal partnership relationships and community based initiatives - for example with the Leeds Playhouse, with E5 Bakehouse in London and Centre 88 in Hull. These collaborations have enabled numerous individuals to access OISC level advice, to meet new friends, to co-plan and deliver cultural celebrations, to learn or practice their English and to take part in other skill and confidence building activities in safe, welcoming environments.

As clients and support workers in evaluation consultations reflected, newly arrived or status granted refugees face numerous and difficult challenges as they begin to build new lives alone or with their families in the UK. For example the language barrier and for many, the very different UK systems for accessing housing, welfare benefits and employment, health and education, can be extremely hard to understand and navigate. The existence, accessibility and expertise of the New Roots Project has enabled its clients to receive experienced, expert, professional but also friendly support and advice across a wide spectrum of information and support needs. Review of the evaluation feedback from clients and other stakeholders that is summarised in the main body of this report, clearly indicates that New Roots has met or surpassed almost all of its target outputs under AMIF funding. Qualitatively, it is also clear in the breakdown of 107 stakeholder impact assessments below, that New Roots clients have been effectively engaged and helped in each of the project's planned outcome areas (as indicated in bold):

- Overall the project supported and was engaged with by more than 6000 individuals from refugee backgrounds.
- The client base included individuals from more than 90 countries of origin.

- 96% agreed (7% partially agreed) that New Roots **helped to improve access to quality support** for refugees in crisis and those seeking to integrate.
- 86% agreed (9% partially agreed) that New Roots has **helped refugees to have early access to information, advice and guidance.**
- 92% agreed (3% partially agreed) that New Roots has **helped refugees to build skills and experience.**
- 63% agreed (17% 'partially agreed) that New Roots has **helped to strengthen local support systems.**
- 98% agreed (1% 'partially agreed) that **in future there will be a need** for the type of support currently provided by the New Roots Project.

Notably, and to the immense credit of everyone involved in the delivery of New Roots' work, the successful delivery of the project and its impact were achieved despite the numerous challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and national 'lockdown' requirements that made in person client engagement impossible for long periods during 2020/21.

The main body of this evaluation report describes in more detail the impact and learning of the New Roots Project as it was expressed in consultations with 42 clients, 31 external stakeholders and 34 New Roots team members in each of the cities where services are based. As the project approaches the end of its AMIF funding in December 2023 and the partners begin to scale down or end their service provision, two of the strongest and most consistent themes to emerge in cross- stakeholder feedback were:

Firstly, the volume and complexity of refugee advice, support and integration needs in the current New Roots cities and in other areas of the UK is not expected to recede - most stakeholders anticipate that it will remain high and probably increase, especially if and as asylum determination processes and decision making become quicker. Stakeholders across the partnership emphasised the ongoing need for the range of activities and services that New Roots has offered and anticipate a substantial gap in essential support for refugees when the project ends. This is likely to generate additional pressure and cost for services such as CAB, other grass roots organisations and mainstream service provision.

Secondly, the range and combination of generic and specialist advice and support roles that New Roots offers has been a key success factor in the project's design and approach. Whilst the ending of AMIF funding for New Roots is forcing the Refugee Council and its partners to make difficult changes and decisions regarding current service priorities, evaluation stakeholders have stressed the inter-

connectedness of client support needs in the context of their integration journeys. In order to be able to focus, plan and achieve employment, education or any other personal integration goals, the basic needs and issues for refugees - for example relating to health, housing and benefits, immigration status, family and social connections - need to also be addressed. The capability of New Roots teams to provide clients with early, holistic support with a range of problems, facilitates their integration and has been one of the key strengths and learning points in the delivery of the project.

The recommendations offered below largely draw upon the learning and planning suggestions recorded in consultations with New Roots clients, delivery teams and external stakeholders in the completion of the evaluation. Some of the recommendations will be less or more relevant to different New Roots partners depending on their roles in the broader project's delivery. The context and basis for the recommendations is described in more detail in the main headings of the evaluation report. As previously noted, the current period of AMIF funding ends in December 2023 which we are aware is leading to the closure or contraction of New Roots services in their current form. Whilst this inevitably makes it unlikely that recommendations could be implemented in the short term, we hope that they will usefully support and inform service development, planning and delivery by partners in the future.

Recommendations

- 1) Aim in future to sustain and build on the partnership based holistic support model that formed the basis for the New Roots Project.
- 2) Strengthen the links between the operational work of client facing projects and services (such as New Roots) and the policy facing work of the Refugee Council and its partners at all levels, locally, regionally and nationally - for example through information sharing structures between support project staff and advocacy/policy teams and networks.
- 3) Resource and embed (or build in accessibility to) specialist, refugee oriented therapeutic support in the budgets and design of future integration support projects.
- 4) Resource and embed OISC compliant advice accessibility at Level One and higher (as appropriate) in future integration support models.

- 5) Ensure that all client support team members, including volunteers have access to appropriate supervision and support based on their roles - for example this could include extending Reflective Practice sessions, Employment Assistance Programmes, access to therapists and Trauma Informed Practice training to volunteers and colleagues in partner organisations.
- 6) Review and ensure user friendly data capture systems and access to training as necessary to ensure compatibility, consistent and effective use within and across partner organisations.
- 7) Explore ways of providing more employability related support and opportunities for clients who are a long way from being ready for the employment market - for example for people with poor English language skills and/or confidence. This might include for example, specific employment training for clients with poor English skills.
- 8) Build on the experience, learning and successes of the New Roots Project in helping clients achieve their long term employment goals and potential - rather than short term, precarious, low skilled and low paid jobs that many can feel forced to take.
- 9) Aim to resource and increase the capacity of future integration support projects to work collaboratively with more employers, businesses and employment support projects - to enhance volunteering, work placement and employment opportunities for refugees.
- 10) Build on the learning of New Roots in future refugee integration supports, to resource and include the provision of (for example) social and engagement activities, conversation cafes, ESOL groups, multi-agency drop in advice and support sessions, skill development workshops, crèches (etc.) - regular times and spaces where refugees can meet socially, relax or come to seek help with a specific problem. This (as currently) could be offered through partnerships and collaborations with local organisations that can offer different facilities and opportunities.
- 11) Review the purpose, design and value of the Integration Outcomes Star that was developed as part of the New Roots Project - making adjustments and refinements as needed to ensure it is easy to use and 'fit for purpose' in future integration support projects.

3. Foreword by Jasmine Evans, National Programme Manager of the New Roots Project

I am fortunate to have been involved in the New Roots Project from its inception in October 2018 and to witness the development of a truly holistic and collaborative project, working with refugees across the country. The positive findings in this evaluation report are reflective of the honest dedication and commitment shown by paid staff and volunteers, to improve access to quality support, guidance and opportunities for refugees in England.

The New Roots partnership of Refugee Council, RETAS, PATH Yorkshire, Goodwin Development Trust and HCAS has strengthened throughout five years of collaboration, working together to solve problems and sharing best practice. Each organisation has brought their own expertise and perspective, which has enabled learning and development across the board. I am confident that although the formal partnership is coming to an end, the strong links we have established as a result will endure, leaving an open door for future collaboration.

The New Roots partnership has in total engaged well over 6000 individuals since the project started, from a broad range of cultural, social and economic backgrounds and each with their own story. It continues to be a real privilege to work with people who demonstrate such resilience and determination in the face of real challenge. The 'looking back and to the future' section of this evaluation report shares reflections of refugees who are settling in the UK and captures the very essence of these experiences.

Recently we have seen the evolvement of the Nationality and Borders Act alongside other key policy and practice changes affecting people seeking asylum, including streamlined asylum processing and the reduction in notice period for newly granted refugees to leave their accommodation. As a result, teams across the partnership have frequently reviewed and adapted their approach and worked tirelessly to advocate with refugees for fair access to provision. The findings in this evaluation report reflect not only a significant but increasing need for early access to quality support and Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) to minimise the risk of destitution and crisis, in addition to opportunities to re-build confidence, develop skills and social networks and move into education and employment. I am hopeful that with the development of tailored and bespoke Integration and Employability models, the Refugee Council will be able to continue this much-needed area of work moving forward.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the organisation to recognise each member of staff, volunteer, and interpreter from across the partnership who has been involved in New Roots since 2018. Your passion and dedication to supporting people seeking sanctuary in the UK is truly inspiring and continues to make a significant difference in the lives of those we support each and every day.

Final thanks to Richard Malfait and Nick Scott-Flynn for their efforts in pulling this evaluation together and in particular for their sensitivity and commitment to supporting refugee voices to be heard.

Jasmine Evans

National Programme Manager, New Roots Project

4. New Roots impact against main targets and outcomes - statistical summary

Between October 2018 and December 2020, the support and activities delivered by the New Roots Project were engaged with by 2739 refugees who originated from more than 90 countries. The top five countries of origin during phase one were Eritrea (17%), Syria (16%), Sudan (13%), Iran (12%), Iraq (5%). In the second phase of project delivery between January 2021 and September 2023 (at the point of writing), the project was engaged with by 3703 people from refugee backgrounds who originated from more than 90 countries. The top five countries of origin during phase two were Eritrea (19%), Iran (13%), Afghanistan (12%), Sudan (12%), Syria (10%). Notably, the sixth highest nationality during this phase of the project delivery was Ukraine (7%).

The proportional engagement of clients under New Roots' three broad service areas of Engage, Connect and Aspire is broken down in the table below:

Service	October 2018 - December 2020	January 2021 - July 2023
Engage	47%	52%
Connect	19%	9%
Aspire	35%	39%

Stakeholder impact assessments against New Roots' planned outcomes

Evaluation stakeholder groups in each city were asked to assess the impact of the New Roots Project against the target outcomes that were defined in the project description and funding agreement. Their responses are summarised in the following tables:

a) Improving access to quality support for refugees in crisis and those seeking to integrate

Stakeholder groups (count)	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree	I don't know	Other
Clients (42)	38	4			
External stakeholder (31)	28	1		2	
Project teams (34)	32	2			
Totals (107)	98 (92%)	7		2	

b) Enabling early access to information, advice and guidance

Stakeholder groups (count)	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree	I don't know	Other
Clients (42)	38	3	1		
External stakeholder (31)	25	3		3	
Project teams (34)	29	4	1		
Totals (107)	92 (86%)	10	2	3	

c) Helping clients to building skills and experience

Stakeholder groups (count)	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree	I don't know	Other
Clients (42)	39		2		1
External stakeholder (31)	27	2		2	
Project teams (34)	32	1		1	
Totals (107)	98 (92%)	3	2	3	1

d) Strengthening local support systems

Stakeholder groups (count)	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree	I don't know	Other
External stakeholder (31)	21	3		7	
Project teams (34)	20	8		6	
Totals (65)	41 (63%)	11		13	

5. New Roots impact and difference made - themes in stakeholder feedback

"We have supported hundreds of refugee adults and families with their move-on as newly recognised refugees; out of destitution, and into suitable housing, with relevant benefits, healthcare and social support in place." Internal stakeholder.

The following themes of feedback on the general impact and value of the New Roots Project emerged in the evaluation responses across all stakeholder groups and were largely common to each of the project delivery locations:

Welcoming and supporting new arrivals: Clients frequently commented on the reassurance, respect and warmth of welcome they experienced from the New Roots teams in their respective cities. Many clients who came to the UK as part of a resettlement programme reported feeling excited but also highly anxious prior to their arrival in the UK. Many had endured long periods of uncertainty, restrictions, discomfort and danger in their countries of origin or temporary refuge. One of the most prominent themes when they looked back on their arrival was of their sense of relief and an opportunity to begin a new life.

"Whenever I needed their help, they were always there with quick answers. For finding a place to live, they assisted me because it was hard to do alone. When I asked for help, they were patient and dedicated. Even though they could not get me a travel document themselves, they connected me with a group and kept checking on how things were going. This way, I could eventually bring my family back together." Client

"Client support is at the heart of the New Roots team that I worked with values. This has been consistently demonstrated through their determination to support their clients to rebuild lives here in the UK." External stakeholder.

Early provision of good quality advice and information: New Roots teams were instrumental in providing clients with important information and explanation in numerous areas, for example relating to their new homes and neighbourhoods, schools, shops, money and welfare benefits, GPs, health and other mainstream services. Where information and advice beyond the remit and expertise of the New Roots partner was needed, teams were usually able to signpost and refer clients to the necessary organisations and services (appropriate mental health support often being a noteworthy exception). Information and advice was effectively made available and accessed by clients in several ways, for example through one to one casework provision and also in a variety of themed workshop formats provided by local New Roots teams and partner organisations. The effectiveness of New Roots in often

being able to identify and respond to a client issue (for example relating to housing or benefits) at an early stage often prevented smaller issues developing into more serious and complex problems at a later stage.

"New Roots significantly increased RETAS's capacity to work with refugees during the move on period and this has been profoundly helpful. Previously we did a lot of this work but the division of labour has been welcome as it has resulted in increased capacity for us to work with asylum seekers. Similarly, being able to refer refugees to the Refugee Council for assistance with straightforward immigration matters has been very useful - there is very little capacity to do this work elsewhere." Internal stakeholder.

"(A key strength has been) ... offering competent advice and advocacy service for new refugees in areas that have very limited or no legal/advice support available. This is critical." External stakeholder.

"Unless refugees get early access to information they can miss a lot of things especially with things which has deadlines. So New Roots play a big role in guidance and providing information to refugees." Client.

"When you get refugee status, it's hard. You're not working, you have a lot of paperwork to do that you're not good at. You need to find a new home. There are a lot of steps that need to be taken. RETAS helped a lot with these steps." Client.

"The (New Roots Project) helped me with applications for documents and introduced me to the conversation cafe. It helped so much in learning English - it was a great experience and felt good. I felt very lucky to be supported by everyone." Client.

"They helped me (for example with) - bus ticket reimbursements and trips. RETAS helped me get a bank card and PATH helped with a CV workshop and ESOL. They (New Roots) helped me to do a job application - I wouldn't have done it on my own. And they explained about my electric and any letter that came to me." Client.

Tailoring integration support to client needs as they changed: Evaluation stakeholders, including clients, in each New Roots area described an approach to integration support that was based on an assessment of the priority needs and goals of individuals and families, initially at the point of arrival in their respective cities and subsequently over time as their needs and aspirations changed.

"When my children needed to go to school they chose a good school for us and helped with uniforms and lots of things. My daughter had a few problems when some students told her to go back to her country. But the Refugee Council helped by speaking with the school. Since then she did a degree and now she is working as a fashion designer in London. She has created her future from the support and encouragement that she got from her school." Client.

"Without New Roots I wouldn't have been able to move forward. They helped me with many things, like bringing my family back together, taking classes to learn English, getting my driver's license, and making sure I had permission to be in

certain places. They even helped me get a security badge and travel documents. They went beyond that and even helped me find a house to live in. In short, they were there for everything I needed to live, to get things done and to learn. Moreover, when they could not help with something, they connected me with others who could support me." Client.

Providing expert therapeutic support: The specialist therapeutic support that was accessible through the New Roots Project and structured into its delivery was felt to have been of vital benefit to the welfare of clients that accessed it. The therapeutic support element of the project was also valued as an expert resource to which support workers both within and external to the New Roots Project could refer vulnerable clients. Several stakeholders emphasised that in their view, many if not most people who have come to the UK as refugees, are traumatised by their experiences of conflict and many need expert assessment and therapeutic help that is not available in mainstream provision.

"The therapeutic work undertaken in South Yorkshire with resettled refugees has enabled refugees to access psychological therapy, and this would not normally be accessible to them within the NHS. Our service has been located within a refugee agency they trust, and therapists are familiar with the refugee context/work with a trained group of interpreters and know the range of challenges refugees and their families are facing. The service has had a positive impact on their health and mental wellbeing." Internal stakeholder.

"Many of the refugees referred for therapy accessed our team in crisis, and we were able to respond quickly and alleviate distress. Mental ill health can make it difficult for refugees to integrate, and so therapy contributed to clients being able to access community events and resources." Internal stakeholder.

"I assess that half of our clients would benefit from this element of support." Internal stakeholder.

Providing OISC level immigration advice and assistance: Access to good quality, free immigration and asylum related advice and support remains extremely difficult across most of the UK as a result of changes in legal aid provision and consequently fewer providers. New Roots clients were able to access immigration advice and assistance from team members who were trained and registered at OISC Level 1 and 2 (Asylum and Protection). Support was provided in response to a range of client needs including for example, applications for, Indefinite Leave to Remain, travel documents, leave in line and identity cards.

"They assisted me in reuniting with my family and getting the travel document. They also kept teaching me about the rules and laws of the country. This helped me fit into the community better and finally have my family with me again. We were separated when I had to leave my home country." Client.

"New Roots has made a huge difference to the immigration advice and support ecosystem regionally." External stakeholder.

"Refugee Council have successfully worked with FIAP to train their staff up to OISC level 2 enabling them to give more complex, quality immigration advice. HCAS and RETAS are also progressing on this journey." Internal stakeholder.

Helping refugees to learn new skills, to progress and achieve their employment and educational

goals: Some of the most commonly recorded evaluation feedback from New Roots clients related to the value and impact of the help that they received to help them understand employment in the UK, to access the information they needed and to develop the skills and confidence needed to achieve their goals. For some this was going to college and university to achieve qualifications and for others it was landing their first UK job or taking steps to develop a new (or resume a previous) career path.

"I have enjoyed helping clients get back on their feet and seeing them start to realise their potential. In the case of longer term clients, it has been great to see them from the start of their journey out of a tough situation to starting their career in medicine." Internal stakeholder.

"It (finding work) was very challenging. I tried to apply for jobs on my own but it was too hard. I got an interview but failed. It all felt very different. New Roots then helped me - about how to apply, how to do an interview and be a good employee. Then I got a job that I applied for and now my favourite thing about life is my job." Client.

"I believe their programme offered amazing employability support to refugees in Yorkshire & Humber. I'm really sad and worried that the programme is coming to an end, without it, we're left with a huge gap in provision which can set back many refugees on their employment & integration journeys. The workshops delivered through this programme were of high quality. The team managed to establish some good employment pathways (for example, with IKEA) and helped many clients get on the employment ladder." External stakeholder.

"I had studied pharmacy and had a Masters. I was a health care coordinator before I was a refugee. As a health professional you have to go through lots of conversion processes. I thought it would be easier but it's not. I have to go through NARIC and get certification. I spoke with the New Roots employment worker - they took all my certificates and qualifications and dealt with them and the processes. Now I can move onto the next stage. I wouldn't have been able to do this without their help." Client.

"I am volunteering with the Refugee Council now - I help clients with family reunion applications, housing issues, driving licence applications and other things. And I improve my English - I think "I am in England now - I want to speak English". Client.

"We did a certificate course and bakery course. We do some classes in person and on Zoom. I was part of the E5 bakery course and the baking. I tried to practice at home and the kids love it!" Client.

Building language skills and confidence: This was both an area of priority need and also New Roots impact identified in the evaluation feedback and the comments of numerous stakeholders, including clients in each New Roots service location. New Roots teams responded effectively to the needs and enthusiasm of clients seeking to learn or improve their English language skills and confidence in several ways. This included linking clients into local ESOL course provision as quickly as possible and it also included creating weekly sessions and informal 'conversation clubs' which were accessible, interesting and fun for clients to take part in. Aside from their value and effectiveness in helping clients to learn, practice and grow confidence in English, the sessions and activities also provided opportunities for clients to meet up with other refugees and to make new friends.

"I feel more confident about getting a job because I speak much better English [compared to when I first came]. I feel more confident as I know how to use the public transport system [thanks to the Refugee Council explaining it]. I feel more confident in job interviews as the training [in interviewing] provided (organised through the Refugee Council) helped me practice my interviewing." Client.

"I feel confident now in doing interviews for jobs. I now feel confident, proud and stable in my life here." Client.

"I feel able to speak out now (about my rights and those of others) - I feel more confident." Client.

"HCAS helped me build up my confidence and then to get a job. I learnt a lot about applying for jobs and then got one." Client.

"Their (New Roots partner) classes were really useful too. They taught me English, how to drive, and about staying safe. This helped me get my driver's license and security badge on time. By the time my family came, I had most of the important documents I needed. The classes also covered things like parenting and rules, which gave me a better understanding of how things work and helped me fit in with people and cultures" Client.

"(New Roots helped) ... by taking classes about parenting, English, my rights, and the laws and rules of the country, I have become more confident in facing problems on my own. These classes taught me a lot, and now I know more about many things, which helps me, handle challenges without needing help from others like before." Client.

Reducing isolation and loneliness: A strong theme throughout much of the evaluation feedback from stakeholder groups was related to the positive impact of New Roots on reducing client isolation. The conversation clubs, drop-in sessions, skill development workshops, ESOL groups, trips, cultural celebrations and group activities that were accessible through the New Roots formal and informal local partnerships were referenced in the feedback of many clients and other stakeholders. Specific examples included the "Not Just Bread" project co-delivered by E5 Bakehouse in London and various

trips, activities and events that were co-planned and delivered with the Leeds Playhouse and Centre 88 in Hull. The location and nature of these venues and host organisations offered safe, welcoming, accessible, city centred based environments in which clients could get to know and trust project staff and volunteers - people that they could approach for help in a range of matters or receive expert advice from relating to their immigration status and other needs. They also enabled people to meet new and older friends, and to meet other refugees with shared cultures, languages and experiences both from countries of origin and as newcomers settling in the UK. Whilst it is hard to evidence or quantify the value of this aspect of New Roots' delivery, its positive impact on the emotional welfare and wellbeing is clear from the comments of many clients:

"I liked - the conversation cafe and talking to people - always getting new information and meeting people." Client.

"I think the value of the social element of the work should not be underestimated or undervalued. It is a key component of support to clients and although it may sometimes seem less pressing [than providing advice for example] it has such a positive impact on our client. It enables them to build links and friendships that help with their integration and transition from the support that we provide." Internal stakeholder.

Reducing the pressure on mainstream and other service providers: One of the less obvious impact areas resulting from the existence, accessibility and effectiveness of the New Roots Project was its effect in reducing pressure on other service providers that clients (in the absence of New Roots) would probably need to approach.

"New Roots benefits other organisations too. It relieves a lot of pressure on the local authorities for example by preventing so many people from going to 'Housing Options'. RETAS and Goodwin work very closely with the council regarding housing - helping people understand the housing system and filling in the forms, providing interpreters. New Roots teams know the system." Internal stakeholder.

6. Strengths in project design and delivery - what elements of the project design contributed to its impact?

Partner expertise and experience: Collectively and as individual organisations, the New Roots partner agencies can draw upon many years and substantial experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees both nationally and in local contexts. Many of the managers and their delivery teams (including volunteers) not only have role specific skills and expertise in supporting refugee integration but in many cases, they themselves also have 'lived experience' of war, persecution and of being forced to leave their homes and lives behind to 'start again'. This combination of personal and professional experience, commitment and expertise was clear and often identified as a key delivery strength in the evaluation process. Organisation based stakeholders both within New Roots teams and in external organisations also reflected on the lack of comparable combinations of expertise and experience in other local support provision.

"(New Roots strengths? ...) ... the quality of their staff - everyone seemed really engaged and worked hard to deliver best results. Their pro-activeness and pursuit of best opportunities for their clients. They really listened to the needs of their service users and tried to not only find solutions at the operational level." External stakeholder.

"(Strengths?...) ... the professionalism of staff from the Refugee Council particularly the case workers I worked regularly with for five years." External stakeholder.

Needs based / holistic approach: Each of the combined elements of the New Roots Project clearly responded to the needs of newly recognised and arrived refugees in each of its delivery locations. As internal stakeholders in New Roots teams and in external organisations frequently reflected, the integration aspirations, multiple challenges and support needs of refugees in the UK are frequently interconnected and clients therefore benefitted from the holistic approach that was offered by the New Roots teams. For example, being able to adequately communicate across a language barrier, to access services, information and entitlements, to solve problems, to participate in communities and work towards employment goals - all were common challenges for many refugee families and individuals. A barrier or issue in just one of these areas can often impact the ability to progress in the others.

"We focussed on employability but problems with houses or other things get in the way." Internal stakeholder.

In this respect especially, the combined elements that formed the basis for New Roots' structure and delivery were especially well conceived and able to respond to the multiple and interlinked needs of many new refugee families.

"Coming here (to the conversation club) has helped me to meet other people and to improve English. I also got advice and information and they helped me get onto an ESOL course. I go to classes now. I come here for all problems. It's an important place for everyone." Client. Leeds

"No other combination of providers could provide the same holistic package of benefits as this project." External stakeholder.

"One key strength of the New Roots Project is its holistic nature in addressing the needs of refugees - ranging from helpline advice, social integration, immigration advice, therapeutic support, information and advice during the move on period and specialist employment support. It is rare to have the resources within one project to be able to deliver such a wide range of vital interventions to our client group." Internal stakeholder.

Synergy of generic and specialist support: The provision of generic advice and assistance, for example relating to housing or benefits issues, alongside the provision of more specialist assistance for people working towards employment goals, or with immigration advice or mental health support needs, was identified as a key strength in the New Roots partnership model.

"Having specialisms within the project team has enabled us to focus on complex cases. It has also allowed us to advocate on specific issues related to those specialisms. The specialisms have helped us to have an authority within the [refugee] sector in terms of advocacy and sharing our expertise and learning with others. For example, we now have an expertise in issues relating to the Private Rented Sector (PRS) that has developed through our work on this project. ... we have established a good synergy between generic support and specialist support which complement one another." Internal stakeholder.

Effective collaboration and partnership working: Feedback from internal stakeholders on the value and effectiveness of the New Roots partnership model and work was especially positive in relation to the Leeds, Hull and Sheffield areas of delivery. The internal partnership linkage with the Refugee Council team in London didn't come across as strongly in feedback from stakeholders but this was against a backdrop of high demand and stretched capacity with a distinctly separate client group in London (in other words there was less cross over of support and service provision with shared clients as was more the case in the North). Furthermore elements of the Yorkshire and Humber delivery model were delivered by partners which required and embedded local communication and coordination practices in contrast to the London model which was delivered solely by Refugee Council.

Coordination and communication on a cross partnership basis including London was felt to have improved in the final year of the project. The main benefits of the close partnership working between New Roots agencies in the North included clarity of roles, trusted relationships and enhanced communication, ease of information sharing and cross referral of clients as new or follow on needs arose. The partnership working also provided opportunities, especially for the smaller organisations, to build their experience of delivering services and providing monitoring information under the terms of AMIF funding. The Refugee Council was also credited with providing valuable and effective leadership, coordination and capacity building support as the lead organisation in partnership.

"The partnership with the E5 bakery in London who ran the Not Just Bread course has been excellent." Internal stakeholder.

"We have worked successfully with the Refugee Council for years. This organisation has extensive expertise and experience in working with refugee populations. They have developed specialised knowledge in areas such as refugee law, human rights, humanitarian assistance, and psychosocial support. This expertise allows us to understand the unique needs and vulnerabilities of refugees and design appropriate programs and interventions. By working together, we managed to maximize our impact and reach a larger number of refugees." Internal stakeholder.

"Working in partnership meant we could help people newly granted refugee status to be completely set up with the basic things they would need in a short space of time: bank account, housing, benefits etc., learning English, travel document applications and job support. Each charity could bring its own area of expertise and provide more support as a partnership than would be possible individually." Internal stakeholder.

Community roots / linkage: The New Roots Project was funded and delivered as a formal partnership of organisations, all of which were embedded and accessible in their respective local communities. The model helped ensure that local connections with other projects and grass roots organisations could be further developed thereby enhancing the range and accessibility of activities and support that refugees (and asylum seekers) could connect or be signposted to. Examples included partnership arrangements with lawyers and law firms in London (for example relating to Pre Action Protocol letters), with landlords and with organisations developing Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation (for example, Notre Dame). Several stakeholders commented that the approach of working collaboratively rather than in competition with other refugee support organisations was an effective and welcome way to enable sharing of information, of raising awareness and for capacity (legacy) building potential to be realised. In all of the New Roots bases, some internal New Roots team members reflected that they would have liked to be have been able to do and achieve more in

developing links with local grass roots organisations and groups - the main barrier and limiting factor in all areas was primarily time and capacity.

"Going back to 'in person' working (after the pandemic lockdown) at the Leeds Playhouse was the best thing. It's always on the same day, same time, same place. Even on the one day we closed due to the heatwave, twelve people still turned up. People go there because they know friendly faces. Working with the Leeds Playhouse has been great." Internal stakeholder.

"New Roots draws on the skills of smaller community based organisations - their skills, links and experience - therefore clients receive good service. For example, a client can receive 'move on' advice from HCAS and RETAS - during a crucial period (in the 28 days transition period after they receive refugee status). It makes or breaks peoples' integration." Internal stakeholder.

Including therapeutic / mental wellbeing support: The need for many people from refugee backgrounds to be able to access specialist mental health and therapeutic support was a theme in the feedback of several New Roots stakeholders. Whilst access to mainstream mental health support is theoretically available for many people from refugee backgrounds, eligibility criteria, very long waiting times and lack of English can often make it very difficult or impossible for people to get the support they need. As independent evaluators, we have often been told by refugee support workers and significantly also by mental health professionals, that mainstream mental health services are not well equipped to understand the experiences and to meet the needs of traumatised refugees, many of whom have been tortured, bereaved or subjected to sexual violence in prisons and war zones. Stakeholders identified the inclusion of access to specialist therapeutic support as a vital strength in the design and delivery of the New Roots Project. Sadly the funding for the specialist therapeutic support that was initially provided in Hull and subsequently Sheffield, ended in early 2023. Again, feedback in both this and similar service evaluations has emphasised the quality of and need for the type of specialist therapeutic support that the Refugee Council and partner organisations such as Solace have provided spanning many years.

"The therapy team being embedded within the (Sheffield) resettlement team reduced many of the barriers to accessing mental health support for resettled refugees, and enabled a wraparound approach which was very effective. It also meant that for those clients who were vulnerable in terms of suicide risk/mental health distress or safeguarding, there was a cohesive support model that clients experienced as containing and helpful." Internal stakeholder.

Trauma informed approach: Several New Roots team members emphasised the importance of adopting a trauma informed approach in working with clients and supporting them in accessing services and entitlements.

"Adopting a trauma informed approach to client work has changed the way we work. We are better at recognising that many of our clients have complex problems and often need (or should get) support from the local authority. But accessing that support is more difficult if the person has experienced trauma. Through our trauma informed approach, we are able to identify the issues and support he clients more appropriately and secure the support that they need." Internal stakeholder.

Embedding access to OISC level 1 and 2 immigration advice: Good quality, free legal advice in the areas of asylum and immigration is extremely difficult for most refugees and asylum seekers to access due to lack of provision resulting from progressive cuts in Legal Aid. The New Roots Project embedded OISC level provision alongside its other services and activities, often in the same buildings and 'drop in' environments. This approach to resourcing and integrating access to legal advice within New Roots' wider delivery enabled clients to easily ask for and receive information, explanation and assistance with a variety of needs such as applications for travel documents, citizenship, ID cards and family reunion.

Building links with employers and colleges: The building of links and working relationships with employers and education providers in each of the project delivery areas was identified as a strength and an essential component of supporting refugee employment in the feedback of several stakeholders, internally and externally. The development of contacts, relationships and activities with a range of external organisations helped to raise awareness of the skills, experience and potential that many refugees can offer. It was also identified as a challenge and learning point in that several New Roots team members reflected that they wanted to be able to do much more in this area of the project's delivery (but were limited by capacity).

"The New Roots Project is highly valuable in providing tailored support to people who need education and employment support. This has been particularly impactful when the Refugee Council have advocated for individuals who have come up against barriers or have been given inaccurate information elsewhere; the expertise and support given by the New Roots Project makes a real difference." External stakeholder.

Volunteering roles: The inclusion of volunteering roles and the contribution of volunteers was identified as a vital strength in evaluation feedback across many areas of the New Roots Project delivery. A common reflection was that the level of accessibility, volume and quality of activities and

support that was provided across the core activities of the partnership would not have been possible without the involvement of its volunteers. Key roles were incorporated in a range of settings, for example in 'conversation clubs', weekly 'drop in' environments and other client led activities and events. The contribution and value of involving volunteers who themselves were from refugee backgrounds was also commented on, with many stakeholders highlighting different benefits of working with people who can draw upon their lived experience of being a refugee and coming to the UK - such benefits included building awareness, links, relationships and understanding between service providers and service users.

"I've enjoyed being a volunteer with the New Roots Project as I've learnt a lot & I feel I've helped make people's day better. I've learnt about different languages and cultures." A New Roots volunteer.

"The volunteering enables people with the lived experience of being a refugee to bring that experience into our work. It helps many volunteers obtain work experience and build on their skills and confidence. We have many examples of people who have volunteered with us who have gone on to obtain employment." Internal stakeholder.

"The volunteers have been essential to running the project and have been excellent." Internal stakeholder.

"The volunteers helps us to involve people outside of the staff of the Refugee Council, which is a good thing." Internal stakeholder.

Whilst the benefit and added value of including volunteering in the delivery model and approach of the New Roots Project was emphasised as a key strength in the project's delivery, stakeholders also identified some challenges and useful learning points to carry forward in future work. These are summarised under the next section of the report.

7. Challenges and learning in the delivery of New Roots Project - what hindered or limited project impact?

"The COVID pandemic, cost of living crisis, and multiple changes to the immigration system have been major challenges. This alongside an increasingly hostile environment for people seeking asylum, refugees, and LGBTQI+ people; and the closure and lack of capacity of many other support services, have caused the majority of our clients to struggle with isolation, debt, delayed benefits decisions, poor physical and mental health and wellbeing, separation from family members, and substandard housing - far more than would have been the case previously."
Internal stakeholder.

Evaluation stakeholders were asked to reflect upon the challenges experienced in the delivery of the New Roots Project and to suggest learning points that could usefully inform and improve future project planning and delivery. Most of the challenges and learning points identified and summarised were relevant or applicable to a greater or lesser extent across all the New Roots Project locations and partners - a more detailed and area specific record can be reviewed in the internal appendices and raw data that were submitted separately with this report. The main themes in stakeholder responses are summarised below.

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions: The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown arrangements that were applicable during periods of the New Roots Project delivery were also frequently identified as a challenge by internal evaluation stakeholders. Again, the challenges of the pandemic also gave rise to valuable learning, especially in relation to creatively adapting the accessibility of service and supporting clients to enable them to engage remotely.

"The pandemic and lockdown a big challenge but we learnt from it - how to do things remotely too now. Good for access - people with children, living far away."
Internal stakeholder.

"Trying to engage people in lockdown was so hard - dropping tablets off at people's houses, explaining how to use the hardware and software was a really big challenge. Internal stakeholder."

Capacity limitations: The capacity and resources of most of the partner agencies to deliver their roles and provide the support needed by clients was stretched at different time across all of the New Roots activities and service bases. In part this was due to the volume of client demand and complexity of issues but it was also a reflection of the difficulties many refugees experience in accessing mainstream

services and entitlements independently. The capacity constraints also impacted upon the ability of partners to develop external partnerships, raise awareness, address barriers and prioritise relationship building for example with other service providers and the employment sector as much as they would have liked to

"We are one of the only services offering this type of support to newly recognised refugees, and to my knowledge the only service that specialises in this type of support alone in London. The very high number of new referrals we receive each week is evidence that the service is in very high demand, but that we lack the resources to take on supporting the large number of people who refer themselves or are referred to our service." Internal stakeholder.

"There is no time limit to many of the services that we offer, as such it is difficult to close some client cases. This is also hindered by it being difficult to transition our clients away from our support to that of other providers. This is because those providers either don't have refugee-friendly services or, we haven't had the capacity to make links with those providers to ease client referrals. Our lack of capacity which means that we have to prioritise and accept that we can't help everyone (even though they all need help). Internal stakeholder.

Monitoring and reporting requirements: Stakeholders in the New Roots partner organisations identified the monitoring and reporting requirements that formed part of the funding contract with AMIF as one of the challenges in delivering and reporting on the work of the project. The monitoring requirements were stipulated by AMIF and as such could not be significantly influenced by the Refugee Council on behalf of the New Roots Project. The level of detail required was difficult and time consuming to gather especially for the smaller partnership agencies and also on a cross partnership basis. There were also some early challenges relating to a funder requirement that project engagement reporting be based upon a 'unique beneficiary' criteria that was difficult to apply in the context of a partnership project in which a client and family members frequently engaged with more than one organisation. The challenges were however successfully addressed through effective communication and collaboration with individual New Roots partners and with AMIF. Stakeholders in each of the New Roots partners identified the challenges of detailed monitoring and reporting to funders as a difficult but useful learning experience, especially for those organisations and managers with less experience of delivering projects requiring this level and detail of reporting.

"The amount of admin put a strain on the staff. They're passionate about the job but not about the admin. It impacts on capacity -we could have seen more clients." Internal stakeholder.

"The level of evidencing and data that we needed to provide (to AMIF) for the project (was a challenge). ... it needed ongoing work and input to achieve what's

needed. It affects the client experience - they just want help, but we have to collect a lot of information." Internal stakeholder.

Access to specialist mental health support: Consistent with the experience of asylum seeker and refugee support services nationally, those working directly with refugees in the New Roots Project highlighted the often unmet needs of many people from refugee backgrounds to be able to access specialist mental health support. Mainstream provision is often not well equipped to respond to the traumatic events and impact that characterise the experiences of refugees who, for example, may have been tortured or brutally bereaved.

"The usual (mainstream) mental health support providers are not used to working with refugees. We need to think twice whether to refer (clients) or not - it can re-traumatise clients! They can see two or three different counsellors and have to repeat themselves each time." Internal stakeholder.

"There is a significant lack of clinically appropriate, culturally sensitive mental health support available to refugees. Statutory provision is often inaccessible, with very long waiting lists - so resourced specialist services are vital." Internal stakeholder.

"The therapeutic element of the project was under-resourced in relation to the need amongst clients and in comparison, to the other parts of the project." Internal stakeholder.

"(A challenge was ...) not having mental health support specific for needs of clients. We had mental health support - was called Haven - started as part of the project but the charity closed so it was lost after a year that we worked with them. We used to have a very good process and communication - it worked beautifully. When lost it was a big challenge for their resettlement - there is nowhere to refer people to. Statutory support is not a good fit." Internal stakeholder.

"When we started we had the therapeutic element but the provider closed that side - it was a big loss. It needs to be included in the future." Internal stakeholder.

Linkage between New Roots teams in the North and London: As previously noted, whilst the partnership relationships, communication and collaboration was generally identified as a strength and success factor in the delivery of the New Roots Project overall, the linkage between teams in Yorkshire and in London didn't come across as strongly in feedback from stakeholders. Nothing in the feedback of New Roots clients or of the other stakeholder groups in either region suggested that the quality and effectiveness of project delivery was compromised or lacking - client feedback from all areas was very positive. New Roots team members simply reflected that the London component of New Roots delivery sometimes felt more loosely linked to the wider partnership. This was attributed in part to limited capacity for cross partnership interaction in the face of high and complex levels of client needs

in London (requiring prioritisation of staff time). It perhaps also reflected the fact that London based clients were a geographically separate group and for integration support purposes, there was less need for information sharing, cross-referral or collaboration with other New Roots partners. Coordination and general communication on a cross partnership basis including London was also felt to have improved in the final year of the project.

"It has been difficult to find time to build partnerships, both internally and externally, due to a general lack of capacity amongst our team. We have tried our best to do this alongside our work, but we have all had very large caseloads involving very complex casework." Internal stakeholder.

"The project in London has been running for a number of years. In Yorkshire and Humberside it was new - it's clear to me now that it's lacking consistency. There should have been more (earlier) emphasis on joining up policy and practice in key areas." Internal stakeholder.

Management changes / restructures: Some internal stakeholders identified changes or delays in filling gaps in staffing and management structures and insecurity of funding in their respective agency as a challenge that sometimes impacted on their ability to develop and deliver their element of the New Roots services as quickly or effectively as they would have wished to.

"When I joined the role there was no manager or coordinator. It was lockdown so there was no formal induction or guidance. Everyone was working distantly for a full year and there was no-one to ask or learn from." Internal stakeholder.

"It was an experimental project at first - it's been brilliant and helped us understand how to support clients in the future. But having the contracts every two years - there was a lot of stress and disruption to cope with, the uncertainty is difficult to deal with. We had three managers in four years - it has an impact on everything. It would be better to avoid this." Internal stakeholder.

Resourcing and supporting volunteer roles: As previously noted, evaluation stakeholders identified the substantial contribution of volunteers as a vital and essential strength in many areas of the delivery of the New Roots Project. The inclusion of volunteer roles in the delivery model also provided some challenges and learning points that will be relevant in future project planning and delivery.

"It can be resource intensive to manage volunteers [more so than managing paid staff]. So, it is not necessarily timesaving." Internal stakeholder.

"I think we need more infrastructure capacity at the Refugee Council to fully support volunteers, including their recruitment, training, ongoing management and retention." Internal stakeholder.

Capacity for developing networks and relationships with external partners and organisations: Whilst much was achieved in this respect across the New Roots Project several internal stakeholders reflected that they would have liked to have been able to do more. The importance and multiple benefits of long term network engagement and relationship development with external organisations (as a means through which awareness raising, community engagement and service accessibility can be improved) was re-affirmed through the delivery of the project. Its necessity and potential with regard to the creation of diverse work placement, volunteering and employment opportunities across mainstream service providers, private businesses and in community sector organisations was also re-emphasised in the delivery and learning of the New Roots Project. As noted, much was achieved across the partnership but as always, the time and resources that could be invested in this aspect of the project's delivery were limited.

"We need more capacity to develop our external partnerships. Especially in London given the number of local authorities and other providers that we need to deal with." Internal stakeholder.

The Integration Outcome Star: A licensed 'Integration Outcomes Star' was developed with 'Triangle' (the brand owner) to support the delivery and to help measure the impact of the New Roots Project. Whilst the development process was felt to have been positive, stakeholders felt that final version of the tool wasn't a good fit for some aspects of their work, particularly when holistic support was provided as part of a partnership.

"We do questions with clients at the outset of our support, during the support and afterwards. However, there are too many questions and the questions/form tends to not be used (staff and volunteers don't have time)." Internal stakeholder.

"The 'integration star'- it was great that we could develop it (as a partnership) ... drawing on lots of different knowledge and experience. We go through it with the client - it's good for RETAS but not such a good fit for Connect (only a couple of areas). It would be good to develop something that works across all the project." Internal stakeholder.

"The Integration Star - a good process for us to go through. We worked with different groups. Not perfect for our project. The benefits of using it have not outweighed the challenges." Internal stakeholder.

Linking operational work with policy and influencing work: Some stakeholders reflected that New Roots could have built and embedded stronger links and information flows between its direct service teams and colleagues in policy facing and influencing roles, both in the Refugee Council and possibly in wider advocacy networks. The front line work of New Roots teams with refugees enabled them to

see on an almost daily basis, the impact of changes in national and regional policy and of cutbacks in services and access to entitlements and support.

"We need to develop stronger links between the operational direct delivery work and the Refugee Council advocacy work. It needs a more structured approach to make the link work, a mechanism, such as regular meetings between the project staff and the advocacy/policy team." Internal stakeholder.

8. Stakeholder assessments and suggestions regarding future need and service delivery

All stakeholders based in both external organisations and New Roots partners were aware that the project in its current form will end in December 2023 when the AMIF funding finishes. Whilst some elements of the New Roots service delivery will continue, stakeholders in evaluation consultations consistently expressed concern regarding the gaps in provision that will be created by the service losses. All stakeholders were asked whether (or not) they think that in future there will be a need for the type of support currently provided by the New Roots Project. As the table below shows, their responses overwhelmingly emphasised an ongoing need, not just to continue current provision but to build upon the work of the partnership in all its activity and service areas.

Stakeholder group / responses	I agree	I partially agree	I disagree	I don't know	Other
Clients (42)	42				
External stakeholder (31)	30			1	
Project teams (34)	33	1			
Totals	105	1		1	

The themes in stakeholder comments and responses regarding future service needs and things to consider or prioritise in planning are summarised below with accompanying examples of responses received. The full range of responses that form the basis for the summaries below have been shared with the New Roots partnership as an internal appendix.

Stakeholders feel there is **ongoing and increasing need for the holistic combination of support** and activities that made up the New Roots Project across its bases:

*"... unless the clients basic needs are met, the clients on the project are not interested either in gaining employment or integrating into the community. Once the basic needs (of housing, food, etc.) have been met, then clients are able to focus on the next steps of gaining employment and becoming more independent."
Internal stakeholder.*

"All refugees need this kind of help. It is difficult to leave your country and face everything new, so support during this period is very important. Especially in the future, this help may be needed, because now there is an economic crisis, laws are changing. Refugees need help to cope with the difficulties they face." Client.

*"There is a lot of need out there and if we had resources, we could try and meet it. The New Roots Project has limited capacity and is restrained geographically, but it could be operating in many places where refugees are if we had the funding."
Internal stakeholder.*

*"Thinking about new projects - there seems to be a focus on employability as the main thing. But there is more to integration than employability - employability is often not the main thing for some people, for example mothers or older people."
Internal stakeholder.*

Several stakeholders advocated the **need for increased capacity** in and across any future partnership project:

"There is a need (for New Roots services) - also to expand what they do - once a week is sometimes not enough." Client.

"The majority of individuals seeking asylum or refugees, similar to myself, find themselves in challenging circumstances. Our experiences have been marked by significant hardships. Moreover, we often lack essential knowledge about crucial matters such as legal regulations, necessary documentation, and the procedures to acquire them – a process that can be time-consuming to navigate. In light of these complexities, the ongoing support of the New Roots partner holds great significance. Expanding their assistance could potentially make an even more profound impact on the lives of many." Client.

Several evaluation responses highlighted that there is **no similar provision** offering access to comparable expertise and capacity in the New Roots areas:

"The present government's commitment to address the asylum backlog means that refugees are likely to be newly granted status at a quicker rate than previously over the coming months. This uptick in decision making coming at a time when the New Roots Project is reaching an end of its funding and there is no comparable replacement is of great concern." External stakeholder.

The **importance of employability support** was commonly emphasised as a key element that should be included in future planning and delivery of support and integration services:

"I think that having more in depth knowledge of education and training especially for professionals trained elsewhere and technicians with much valuable work experience (is needed). The usual advice is do ESOL forever. There should be much more intensive language learning and support for the various occupational areas. they could also work with local authorities to advocate for the development of more accessible and affordable housing." External stakeholder.

The need to **develop stronger and long term links and partnerships with employers, work places, colleges and universities** (and the capacity to do this more) was emphasised across stakeholder groups:

"I think a major focus of the future project's work will need to be in engaging with employers, offering them information, advice and support, coupled with the support package to the refugees themselves, to enable employers to utilise the skills and labour of the local refugee community." External stakeholder.

"The improvement I suggest is that the Refugee Council should contract with employment agencies and colleges to make it easier to get a job and onto courses. You need someone to take you by the hand and show you opportunities." Client.

Stakeholders recommended **more resourcing and co-delivery of community based initiatives** - for example cross service 'drop in' sessions, conversation clubs, workshops and activity sessions in welcoming, accessible environments as part of the design and approach of future integration support:

"We really need to encourage clients to get involved in planning activities and groups, events. They have a voice and also bring knowledge and skills to planning events - Nowruz (Persian (not just the Iranian) New Year), Eid celebrations - both had a client lead for example, giving advice on food and decorations. It helps build confidence, gives responsibility - this is the value and importance of co-production." Internal stakeholder.

"One key strength of the New Roots Project is its holistic nature in addressing the needs of refugees - ranging from helpline advice, social integration, immigration advice, therapeutic support, information and advice during the move on period and specialist employment support. It is rare to have the resources within one project to be able to deliver such a wide range of vital interventions to our client group." Internal stakeholder.

"When someone comes into this space the little things can be picked up and it stops them becoming big things. Being open and friendly - informal but also professional - building relationships with people is really valuable and helps them feel safe and trust us. Other services are not always as understanding. Sometimes other services are very cold and intimidating - we make it a welcoming place for clients." Internal stakeholder.

Integrate or ensure **access to OISC advice** (at level 1 or higher as appropriate) alongside generic advice - this was a vital component in the current New Roots Project and should be included in future service design aims and planning:

"Over the last few years it's (our provision of immigration advice) been built and broadened. Our worker is now working at OISC Level 2 - it's been brilliant. If we think about future development, this needs to be included. Access to good

immigration advice is so hit and miss. The system is set up so that people spend money but get bad service. It's very unfair." Internal stakeholder.

Embedded **specialist (refugee oriented) therapeutic support** (or access to it) should be included in all future integration support and delivery:

"The delays and difficulty in accessing crisis services for refugees/mental health provision in general are severe at the moment, and so building in mental health support within resettlement models/support structures is vital." Internal stakeholder.

"Resourced specialist therapy provision for refugees should be part of every town's mental health delivery that accommodates people seeking asylum and refugees." Internal stakeholder.

"In the event of a future project, perhaps we could try to contract therapeutic and counselling services which some of our clients need ..." Internal stakeholder.

Build (resource) **strong connections between client facing work, policy and influencing roles** both as individual organisations where capacity and expertise is available and through partnership collaboration where resources and capability is more limited (for example in smaller organisation):

"We come up against the impact of policy on our clients daily. Small changes in policy can have a big impact, for example when the government suddenly changed the policies around work and benefits -we were able to tell them the process doesn't work!" Internal stakeholder.

The importance of ensuring **sufficient and appropriate induction, ongoing support and supervision** for both paid and volunteer team members according to their roles was reflected in the suggestions of several internal stakeholders:

"The mental health of some volunteers is impacted upon by their volunteering. Volunteers with the lived experience of being a refugee can sometimes find that the volunteering triggers bad memories from their own experience." Internal stakeholder.

"Extend the reflective practice sessions (that the Refugee Council conduct with staff) to volunteers." Internal stakeholder.

"Enable the Employment Assistance Programme (that the Refugee Council offer with staff) to volunteers." Internal stakeholder.

9. Looking back, feeling proud and looking to the future

The following extracts are drawn from the consultation responses of New Roots clients and team members across the project. We have tried to retain the words used by refugees themselves, although some extracts have been edited for the sake of clarity. We hope that they convey and give voice to the experiences and feelings of refugees who are rebuilding their lives in the cities where New Roots has been delivered.

New Roots clients

In evaluation conversations, New Roots clients in each city were asked "Since you came here - what are you most proud of?" Example responses are listed below:

"I am proud ..."

- *... that I am a volunteer with the Refugee Council now and I help other people.*
- *... that my children are fluent in English and engaged with school. My husband has gone to college and is now employed. I myself have helped organise events. We are doing good.*
- *... that my wife came here and proud in finding work and being integrated into the city. I'm also proud to be learning and speaking English.*
- *... that I'm going to school and my sons to college.*
- *... of going to study and of doing what I want to do.*
- *...of finding work and meeting people and going to college - feeling independent.*
- *... that I became more social with people - the trips and the English group.*
- *... that I am still in ESOL.*
- *... to get refugee status and proud to get a Higher Diploma in Project Management and employment.*
- *... that I enrolled all three of my children in a nearby school, making it convenient for our family.*
- *... of finding a nice home and finding PATH and RETAS. Also my English speaking and working as a volunteer.*
- *... that I am 'keeping moving on'. I'm working, I am in the right way of life.*

- *... of getting into the university.*
- *... of being able and accepted into the university and doing my master's is my biggest achievement.*
- *... of many things - becoming more experienced, improving English, coping with the lockdown. I took many courses and this year begin at the university.*
- *... that I passed the GCSE.*
- *... that my daughter is going to graduate as a pharmacist next year. It is fantastic. She will be able to help us . We are very proud.*
- *... of getting a job and improving my English.*
- *... of getting my job. Also my language skills - learning to speak English better. Now I can help other refugees with my skills and the things I know.*
- *... that my first daughter is doing law at university and my second is also going to college now.*
- *... that I came to the UK!*
- *... for being patient and for preparing before we came to Hull. And I am determined. I am a support worker for refugees now.*
- *... that my family is safe now and we have adapted. I am proud of improving my English too.*
- *... that we came here after we lost everything - home, family, country. But now I feel like I am at home. I'm now a British Citizen. It's very important to have the British passport so we can travel to see other family. My children are building their lives - making their futures.*
- *... of coming to the UK and been able to study.*

We also asked clients "How do you feel now about living here now - for example what do you like best or least about it?". Responses included:

- *Being separated from my family in Egypt is very hard. But things are organised here which is very good.*
- *We are loving the city and exploring it - making Leeds our home. We have security for the family. It's all positive.*
- *The city is good for my family and we have similar people from the same community. It's easy to access the city.*
- *I like the opportunities to study and learn and also the security for the children.*

- *The best is just being able to get around Leeds and enjoy the scenery and meeting people and living in the city. Nothing bad - it's all good.*
- *I feel more stable and everything is OK.*
- *I found a lot of friends and am able to be sociable. The dark is not the worst thing, I can cope with the weather. I don't like contact with the government - it's very slow.*
- *I experience happiness, security, and a sense of belonging. The absence of racism and equal treatment for everyone makes me feel truly settled. I also enjoy the freedom to practice my religion without any hindrance.*
- *I like English people - very humble. English people always leading always to help and support human rights. I like this country - here is the best. No 'least' (apart from the weather).*
- *I'm really enjoying it (Leeds). It's a nice place. My only complaint is the living expense.*
- *I really like the diversity and multicultural aspects of Leeds and you can easily find any kind of community such as Muslim and Arab communities.*
- *Leeds is a good city to study, work and live. This is a great city for young people, it has everything you need.*
- *It is fine but I wish to move out of this city and try another place.*
- *A council house is hard to get and if you rent it yourself it is very expensive. Also there is a lack of dentists.*
- *I felt safe (when I came here) and was not scared of walking around and being killed for no reason any more. It feels like I have been given a chance. It is 100% much better than my life before. It would be too hard to go back. I can sleep with an open door now. That is what I was missing.*
- *Hull is my home now. The people here welcomed me.*
- *I like living in Hull. Before I came here I had been imprisoned. I feel safe living in Hull.*
- *In this country I can go to the theatre and do lots of things. There is freedom and I like it. In college I can talk with girls - this was a problem in Iran - and there is more work here, and democracy. I was welcomed by people in Hull. I like everything here.*
- *I have been to other places in the UK now but I really like Hull. It is small and the traffic is not bad. The people are very friendly. I wouldn't go anywhere else. People know each other here and I feel safer.*
- *We made Hull our home now. We've started our own refugee community organisation and are helping newcomers. Some previous arrivals moved to London to be close to family and friends who are there. But now people are staying and building a community here. I cannot express enough my thanks for what Hull has given me and other refugees. It has given us a lifeline of support. It is an amazing experience being here.*

- *For me the life in here is very good except with my housing issues.*

Finally, we asked New Roots clients about their hopes and goals for the future. Some example responses included:

- *I wanted to be a footballer when I was younger and before I came here. Now I want to be a lorry driver. I need to earn money and send some to my family.*
- *I want to carry on learning English and also go to classes to do art.*
- *I want to drive and I want to do some GCSEs and to get a job when the children are older.*
- *I want to get a new job and to improve my English more - getting the skills needed and reaching (my) potential to fulfil my dreams.*
- *To improve my English and find work to support myself and my son. also to find better accommodation.*
- *I want to work in health care and for my children to be settled with schools in the future.*
- *I hope to find a good job and security. I would love to travel more and see more of the country. also to help people, do voluntary work.*
- *My goal is to continue to study.*
- *I plan to go to university. I need a permanent job that I find myself. To be able to earn money to be able to visit friends.*
- *In addition to seeking security for my family's well-being, I hold onto hope and actively strive to become proficient in English. This proficiency is crucial for pursuing my dream of studying medicine and making it a reality.*
- *To travel, to learn new cultures. To work and study too.*
- *I want to keep studying. I want to travel and get good paying jobs.*
- *My goals are to finish my Bachelor's degree then enrol in a Master's degree and finally work in my field.*
- *My goal is to teach at one of the UK's universities.*
- *Go to university, get an education and help your parents.*
- *I was an accountant before (I had to leave my country). want to increase my income here but not on benefits*
- *I am happy to live here in Hull and to help people. I want to finish my degree and be a nurse.*

- *I used to drive a truck in Eritrea and also I was a mechanic and drove a forklift here. In future I would like to go to college and learn more about using technology. My first daughter is doing law at university and my second is also going to college now.*
- *I want to be a chef.*
- *I will help people. I'm doing a PHD now. My son wants to be a footballer - he's very good! In terms of his education - there is nowhere better than what he has here.*
- *I am studying psychology and I am aiming to support people in the future. I volunteer with the Refugee Council now.*
- *To support my daughters through University. To improve my English. I really like to speak about our journey and how everyone. I was a nursery nurse before. Cared for all the people before.*

New Roots team members

New Roots team members in each project base were also asked what they felt most proud of in looking back on their experience of helping to deliver the project. Some example responses are listed below:

"I am proud ...

- *... of the community events that we organised, especially as they were fun for the clients and they don't often get to experience fun things.*
- *... of being able to support clients in what they really wanted to do. Hearing their voices. Making it happen. Some clients started in a factory and are now studying for a biology degree!*
- *... of being able to change peoples' perspectives - talking with job centres and employers. Making relationships better. Collaborative working. Bringing people together - achieving together.*
- *... of one of our clients working at BBC radio and all the other opportunities and career paths (that we helped clients access).*
- *... of a man we referred to a course on how to start a business in the UK - he sold his first rug in March this year.*
- *... that I've gone from having no legal advice background but have learnt and can now help a client and family apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. They've all been successful so far.*
- *... of what we established with our Conversation Cafe every Tuesday.*
- *... of the teams that we had and the passion and dedication that they've shown in working with this client group - it leads to a huge impact. Seeing the human level interaction - sitting down and having a cup of tea with someone and introducing them to someone else.*

- *... of the local partnership working, of taking part and attending events to showcase and celebrate what is done through this partnership work and by each of the individual organisations.*
- *... to have supported refugees, and made some good friends and acquaintances along the way.*
- *... when I deliver our service support to the refugees and have a phone call or visit from them to show how they were grateful to my help and they are satisfied and happy when they are finally have a home.*
- *... of how accessible our service was and the commitment we made to reducing the barriers refugees face in accessing mental health support.*
- *... of the friendships made, seeing people increase in confidence. Parties such as Nowruz where the lead/ initiative was passed to the clients.*
- *... of being a volunteer with the New Roots Project as I've learnt a lot & I feel I've helped make people's day better. I've learnt about different languages and cultures.*
- *... I have enjoyed meeting and working with people from all over the world and getting to know them. I feel proud that I have hopefully helped them with what I can.*
- *... of connecting with clients, seeing clients progress through a journey to secure meaningful employment. Seeing clients build in confidence through the experience. Connecting with employers to arrange events and session to support and inspire clients.*
- *...of supporting people with very complex casework, which I do not believe they would have been supported with elsewhere. Supporting people to access support networks, to reduce their isolation and so that they can continue to grow and feel empowered to manage their own affairs once we have closed their case.*
- *... of seeing how our support makes a difference in the lives of clients and their families.*
- *...of working with my team, sharing successes and seeing clients feel listened to and valued.*
- *... of helping clients get back on their feet and seeing them start to realise their potential. In the case of longer term clients, it has been great to see them from the start of their journey out of a tough situation to starting their career in medicine.*
- *... when we support a client with an application and the application is successful so we enjoy that the client is happy and one step closer to get integrated.*

10. Concluding comments

We hope that this report provides a useful summary of the findings and themes in stakeholder feedback on the impact, value, strengths and learning from the delivery of the New Roots Project. The project has evidently made a huge and greatly appreciated difference in the lives of thousands of people who have been forced to flee their homes and countries to seek safety and to build new lives in the UK. All contributors engaged very openly, reflectively and constructively throughout the evaluation which is greatly appreciated. The Refugee Council and each of the partner organisations who helped to successfully establish and deliver the New Roots Project should be immensely proud of their teams, the impact of their work and the invaluable support that they provided to so many people. We are especially grateful to the people from refugee backgrounds who shared their stories and described their integration struggles, achievements and goals with us. Their resilience, courage, dignity, skills and achievements are inspiring.

Richard Malfait and Nick Scott-Flynn, October 2023.

R. Malfait Consultants (RMC) Ltd

Email: r.malfaitconsulting@btinternet.com Phone: 07808 297859

Appendix 1 - Note on consultation methodology and summary of contributing organisations and groups

Consultation questions and methodology for the evaluation of the New Roots Project were jointly developed with the New Roots Project partners. Consultation stakeholders (including clients) were identified by the partners of the New Roots Project. Stakeholders were invited to participate in the evaluation voluntarily, either by speaking with the evaluation team in an informal phone or Teams based interview or alternatively by completing an online survey. Evaluation consultations were completed with 42 clients, 26 of whom were interviewed by 11 project volunteers (who had not worked with the clients they interviewed) after receiving an interviewing practice briefing with the evaluation team. All contributing stakeholders were told that their feedback and contributions would be made anonymous and not specifically attributed to individuals in the final report.

Evaluation consultations and survey contributions were completed as shown in the table below:

Stakeholder group	Count
Clients	42
New Roots Team members (paid staff and volunteers)	34
External stakeholders	31

Individuals from the following stakeholder organisations contributed in the evaluation consultations and gave consent for their organisation to be listed in the report. Four external stakeholders opted to remain anonymous and did not give consent for their organisation to be named in the report.

HCAS	PWC	Inspire Academy
Goodwin Development Trust	The Refugee Council	Law for Life
RETAS	HEMCCFL	St Vincent's
Leeds Playhouse	RDS training	National career Service
Welcome to English	Hull University	NB Forum
Leeds Refugee Forum	Refugee Action	East Riding Council
E5 Bakehouse	CAB Chapeltown	Education Development Trust
PATH Yorkshire	Migration Yorkshire	(National Careers Service)
PAFRAS	DLA Piper	