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Mahdy Alraie, Hannah Collins & Andrea Rigon  
In partnership with Citizens UK.

September 2018



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Graphics and layout: Luz Navarro and Paola Fuentes

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 **dpu** **The Bartlett**  
Development Planning Unit 

 **UCL**

Development Planning Unit | The Bartlett | University College London  
34 Tavistock Square - London - WC1H 9EZ

Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 1111 - Fax: +44 (0)20 7679 1112 - [www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu](http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu)

# A comparison of community sponsorship and government-led resettlement of refugees in the UK: Perspectives from newcomers and host communities

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## **Highlights.**

- Social support from the host community is an important part of both resettlement schemes but is more actively promoted through community sponsorship policy,

which allows for both newcomers and host communities to integrate and access services with more ease and support.

- Community sponsorship is a big commitment for any community group but has benefits beyond assisting newcomers to resettle; it offers communities the opportunity to flourish and brings them closer together through active participation and engagement with diversity
- Government-led resettlement has the potential to effectively contribute to a successful integration process but needs supportive systems to enable open communication and collaboration between volunteer community groups and local councils.



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## Abstract

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This research was conducted by Mahdy Alraie and Hannah Collins under the supervision of Dr Andrea Rigon at University College London (UCL), in partnership with Citizens UK and as part of their MSc in Social Development Practice. It explores two schemes for resettling refugees in the UK from the perspectives of the refugees and the host community. Using a multi-dimensional framework to analyse the process of integration we compare community sponsorship with government-led resettlement. We found that the level of social support in community

sponsorship allows for refugees and host communities to better access all dimensions of integration because of the additional support refugees have in navigating the health, housing and education systems. Community sponsorship is a huge undertaking for any community group but it offers a community the opportunity to flourish through an active engagement with diversity. In government-led resettlement we argue that an increase in collaboration between community groups and local councils could enhance the integration process.

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# 1. Introduction

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Globalisation points to the increasing migration and mobility of people all over the world. With the impacts of climate change and continuing conflicts around the world, the displacement of large numbers of people fleeing their homes has become one of the most pressing issues of current times. Political leaders and the media have dubbed current migration flows a 'refugee crisis' as thousands of refugees drown in their attempts to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea while others are suffering violence, uncertainty and insecurity via other routes to Europe. Resettlement offers a chance for people to start a new life, but their arrival on new shores marks the beginning of another difficult journey towards integration. The UK government has committed to resettle 20,000

people affected by the conflict in Syria by 2020. To assist in the resettlement of the 20,000, two programmes are in place: government-led resettlement scheme (GS) and community sponsorship (CS).

First we present an overview of refugee resettlement and an analysis of sponsorship as a means of resettlement in Canada. We look at resettlement in Europe and focus on the UK's two resettlement schemes. Using material collected from interviews with newcomers and host communities we present our findings through different dimensions of the integration process. Lastly, we draw conclusions from our results and lay out future recommendations for resettlement in the UK.

## 2. Resettlement

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as:

*“someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 1951, p. 3).*

Out of 193 members, 147 United Nations member states have signed the convention on refugees, committing to providing asylum to the persecuted and stateless. However, only 20 states offer permanent resettlement (Beiser, 2009) and at the end of 2016 less than 1% of the 17.2 million refugees were resettled (UNHCR, 2016b). Resettlement of refugees in a third country is advocated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) when neither of the other ‘durable solutions’ (voluntary repatriation or local integration) are feasible. In the UK, those deemed ‘most vulnerable’ are referred to the Home Office by the UNHCR. These may include *“women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others”* (Home Office, 2015, p.3).

Resettlement is a life-changing experience for refugees who are forced to make a home somewhere where the society, culture and language are different from their own. It is the responsibility of the host societies to facilitate the integration process which includes cultural orientation, language, education and employment.

### 2.1 Sponsorship as a means of resettlement

Until recently<sup>1</sup> Canada has been the only country to offer what it dubbed private-sponsorship of refugees (PSR). PSR was inaugurated through the 1976 Immigration Act and since 1978 more than 200,000 PSRs have arrived in Canada. Two major movements have defined private-sponsorship in Canada: the arrival of 60,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian people in the late 1970s to early 1980s, and the recent arrival of more than 40,000 Syrians by January 2017, of whom nearly half were privately-sponsored (Hyndman, Payne and Jimenez, 2017). PSRs become Canadian citizens upon arrival and their sponsors fund the first year of resettlement, with the government covering the costs of healthcare and education (Hynd-

man et al., 2017). The PSR scheme claims to strengthen host communities, build powerful bonds between sponsors and newcomers and to foster positive attitudes towards refugees (Government of Canada, 2017).

The direct engagement of civil society in private-sponsorship has been key to its success in Canada. Most PSRs are supported by Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) that have an agreement with the federal government to sponsor refugees. Other refugees are supported by ‘groups of five’ (G5s) who have signed an agreement to support them and are authorised by their community SAH (Hyndman et al., 2017; Tito and Cochand, 2017); they can be individuals, religious groups or private companies. Refugees can also be jointly assisted by private groups and the government in the Blended Visa Office Referral scheme (BVOR). Under the PSR scheme refugees are either selected by the sponsoring groups or by Canadian visa officers (CIC, 2007). This contract, between the sponsors, the state and the newcomers provides social bonds and a friendship network beyond formal undertakings by government agencies (Lanphier, 2003).

Some research has compared PSRs with their government assisted counterparts. Research focusing on Iraqi refugees that arrived in Canada between 2009 and 2014 concluded that PSRs found employment faster in the first three years than government assisted refugees (GARs) (Hyndman et al., 2017). However, other research has highlighted that faster employment may be detrimental to English language learning (Hyndman et al., 2017). Canadian government data from 2016 found that 10 years after arrival in the country there was no difference in income earnings between PSRs and GARs. However, research has also showed that PSRs become self-supporting far quicker than GARs (CIC, 2007).

An earlier study focused on Southeast Asian refugees found that private-sponsorship lead to more successful integration than government assistance, but highlighted issues associated with sponsorship intrusiveness in the refugees’ lives (Beiser, 2003; 2009). Another problem was the feelings of inequity that can occur for PSRs who compare their treatment to other PSRs while GARs are all treated the same.

Improvements to private-sponsorship in Canada have included a move towards refugees having a greater involvement in their resettlement, reconceptualising the



process as a partnership between refugees and sponsors, and more involvement of outside agencies and groups in supporting the sponsoring parties (Hyndman et al., 2017). Advocates for private-sponsorship argue that its primary benefit is not to reduce government costs and commitments in the resettlement process but to enable more refugees to be resettled, complementing the government's role (Hyndman et al., 2017). At the core of successful private-sponsorship is a respectful partnership between the government and civil society that aims for fair selection of refugees and decision-making by mobilised groups of society (Hyndman et al., 2017).

## 2.2 Resettlement in Europe

Since 2015 resettlement policy in the EU has meant 25,980 refugees have resettled in EU member states (EU, 2017). The aim of such schemes is to take the pressure off countries such as Italy, Greece and Turkey who are host to large numbers of displaced people. Resettlement is based on an initial selection by UNHCR and then countries can apply their own selection criteria relating to language, family reunification and cultural and educational background. Germany, who has since 2015 accepted more displaced people than anywhere else in Europe (FT, 2017) also takes part in the UNHCR's resettlement scheme. Resettled refugees are selected on criteria relating to education, language, vulnerability and family reunification. Once they arrive they are given a three year temporary residence permit and local NGOs and authorities assist the integration process (UNHCR, 2016a). Integration and job-related language courses are provided to all resettled refugees to help promote integration responding to individual and circumstantial needs (UNHCR, 2016a).

## 2.3 Resettlement in the UK

In 2015, the UK expanded its refugee quota from 750 through the 2004 'Gateway Protection Programme' (GPP) to 4000 through the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (VPRP) developed in consultation with the National Refugee Welcome Board, a network of more than 40 civic society organisations, convened by Citizens UK (Home Office, 2016). In September 2015, a few days after the worldwide circulation of a photograph of the body of Alan Kurdi, a Syrian boy who drowned on the journey from Turkey to Greece, Prime Minister David Cameron agreed to resettle 20,000 Syrians by 2020, or 4000 each year (Refugee Council, 2017). They are to be admitted into the UK through the VPRP that was expanded in July 2017 to include any nationality fleeing the Syrian conflict (Home Office, 2017a). By February 2018, there have been over 10,500 people resettled in the UK through

the VPRP since the conflict in Syria began in 2011, marking halfway to target to bring 20,000 Syrians to the UK by 2020 (Home Office, 2018)

Through this programme local authorities, who participate on a voluntary basis, are matched with refugees and play a central role in their resettlement. Information about the refugees is sent to the local authority, who then must accept the referral. Local authorities can outsource to a non-governmental organisation to manage the process of resettlement. The local authorities (or outsourced NGOs) are required to meet the refugees at the airport, provide accommodation and assistance in accessing welfare benefits, education, employment and other services laid out in their 12-month support plan (McGuinness, 2017). The costs of the first 12 months of resettlement are covered by central government, which continues to assist but gradually reduces its financial assistance over the next 2-5 years (Jamroz and Tyler, 2016).

Following the instrumental work of the National Refugee Welcome Board, the community sponsorship (CS) scheme was launched in the UK in July 2016. CS aims *"to assist Syrians' integration into UK society,"* (McGuinness, 2017, p. 3) with the idea that *"successful integration of resettled refugees into the UK can be aided by their new local communities,"* (McGuinness, 2017, p. 21). Community groups must be a registered charity or Community Interest Company to sponsor refugees fleeing conflict who are committed to resettling the refugees in their community. The manual for prospective sponsors states *"it promotes positive resettlement outcomes both for the resettled families and local communities,"* (Home Office, 2017c, p. 5). Sponsors are responsible for the refugees from the moment of their arrival, providing airport pick-up, housing, access to medical and social services, English language tuition, schooling, and support towards employment and self-sufficiency. Official support lasts one year, while housing provision is required for the first two years (Home Office, 2017c). In this sense, sponsors take on the same role as local authorities in the government-led resettlement scheme (GS).

Refugees in CS are admitted through the VPRP and are included as part of the government refugee quota. They choose to be sponsored by the community group through CS or supported by local authorities through the GS. One year after the CS scheme was launched, the UK had welcomed 10 families through the scheme. It is still too early to assess the success of CS, however, a review of the similar scheme in Canada, and initial interviews with CS participants can offer insights into the future of CS in the UK. Central to the resettlement process is the complex concept of integration. Despite there being no single definition, model or theory of integration, integration is significant as a policy goal and target outcome for refugee resettlement programmes, therefore it is crucial to understand how the government, host community and refugees understand this concept.

**Table 2.1.** Refugee Resettlement in the UK: Differences in actors' responsibilities between the two schemes based on the current research findings

	Community Sponsorship	Government-led Resettlement
Advocacy/obtaining local council approval	CS group	Refugee Welcome volunteer groups
Monitoring the process of integration	CS group	Local council
Safeguarding responsibility	CS group	Outsourced NGO
Resettlement plans	CS group	Outsourced NGO
Raising funds to cover initial costs	CS group	Home Office allocated budget
Resettlement support	CS groups (around 10 individuals)	One support worker to a number of families (around five or more)
Notify community/press	CS group	Does not happen
Airport pickup	CS group	Outsourced NGO/Local council
Provide money to cover initial costs	CS group	Local council
Stock cupboards	CS group	Outsourced NGO/local council
Identify property and convince landlords	CS group	Local council/Refugee Welcome volunteer groups
Housing provision	Private Landlord/Estate agency	Private Landlord/Estate agency
Housing Rent	Housing benefits	Housing benefits
Support in Accommodation management	CS group	Outsourced NGO
Neighbourhood orientation	CS group	Outsourced NGO
Public transport orientation	CS group	Outsourced NGO
School registration and following up	CS group	Outsourced NGO
Set up bank accounts	CS group	Outsourced NGO
Support to access benefit applications and follow up	CS group	Outsourced NGO
ESOL lessons	CS group provide tailored ESOL lessons	Outsourced NGO facilitate access to ESOL providers
Support to access health services	CS group	Outsourced NGO
Other needs	CS group	Outsourced NGO

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

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1 Following the success of the scheme in Canada similar schemes are now being trialed in Australia, New Zealand, Ger-

many, the Netherlands and Argentina, as well as the launching of the UK's CS in 2016 (Howden, 2016).

### 3. A multi-dimensional framework to assess refugee integration

Central to the resettlement process is the complex concept of integration. Despite there being no single definition, model or theory of integration, integration is significant as a policy goal and target outcome for refugee resettlement programmes, therefore it is crucial to understand how the government, host community and refugees<sup>1</sup> understand this concept.

Often integration is misunderstood as aiming towards a single way of being part of a society and implies that nations require one cohesive culture to function (Castles et al., 2001). This perspective often assumes that a society comprises of one set of shared norms and values and implies a homogenous 'us' without cultures, classes and inequalities that refugees have to fit into (Sigona, 2005). This interpretation describes integration as a process of assimilation (Phillimore, 2012), in which diversity is something to reduce.

Presenting a different perspective, Berry (1997, cited in Phillimore, 2012) states that integration is a strategy chosen by the newcomers and occurs through a maintenance of their original culture while also engaging in their host societies culture. Other authors have built on this view of integration, arguing that it goes beyond a relationship between just the refugees and the host community; it is a multi-dimensional process that involves individuals, the state and society (Ager and Strang, 2008; Daley, 2007; Phillimore, 2012; Sigona, 2005).

Integration must include active engagement with diversity by all stakeholders. Not only can integration be viewed as a multi-dimensional process, it also involves renegotiation of identity of the host community and the newcomers, and the development of a sense of belonging by both (Phillimore, 2012). For integration to be successful there must be policies in place that recognise difference and do not attempt to deny cultural diversity. As the Harvard University Pluralism Project says, "*pluralism is not diversity alone, but the energetic engagement with diversity... mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our society*" (Eck, 2006). Therefore, integration in today's pluralist societies involves the active engagement on one level by policy makers and state institutions, and local communities and the newcomers on another level, with all groups interacting with and adapting to diversity.

#### 3.1 Integration in resettlement policy

Integration is a central resettlement policy principle in the Home Office's CS guidelines and requires a Personal Integration Plan (PIP) for each family member in CS (Home Office, 2017c). In its manual for potential sponsors, the Home Office lays out ways in which sponsors must help the newcomers establish a life in the UK "*through accessing community activities, medical care, language skills, education and employment,*" (Home Office, 2017c, p. 16). In the GS local authorities provide integration casework support for the first 12 months to assist "*all aspects of integration, from ensuring access to income through employment and benefits, access to primary and secondary care, dentists and opticians to compulsory and further education, ESOL and integrating with host communities,*" (Jamroz and Tyler, 2016, p. 27). What seems to be missing in both schemes is guidance on how to assist the newcomers to maintain their own cultural practices or how the host community must adapt to changes the newcomers will bring; in this way, integration is interpreted as a one-way process of assimilation by the Government.

Drawing on the previous literature, the UK's resettlement policy principle of integration and a multidirectional understanding of integration, we developed an analytical framework to compare GS with CS in the UK.

This framework (*Figure. 1*) represents the multi-dimensional process of integration, involving the host community, newcomers and state institutions. Integration is divided into cultural and structural dimensions (Bosswick and Heckmann, 2006). Historically policy and research has focused on the more tangible and measurable structural factors; access to health, education, housing, and employment (Korac, 2003). Cultural integration is more difficult to measure but covers social connections, language and participation in the host community's cultural practices (Ager and Strang, 2008; Bosswick and Heckmann, 2006). As integration is multi-directional, cultural integration would also see the host community adapting to the newcomers, supported by state institutions. The overlapping circles indicate the interconnectedness of each dimension. Access and achievement in all dimensions is required for integration. Integration is only possible if the state institutions, the newcomers and the host community are actively involved.

### 3.2 Structural integration

**Services:** Access to services, including housing, education and health is crucial to the newcomers' successful integration (Ager and Strang, 2008) but it is important to recognise that integration cannot be reflected by attainment in these areas only.

**Employment and welfare benefits:** Access to employment or to welfare benefits impacts integration through economic independence and self-reliance, future planning, meeting people and developing language skills (Ager and Strang, 2008).

### 3.3 Cultural integration

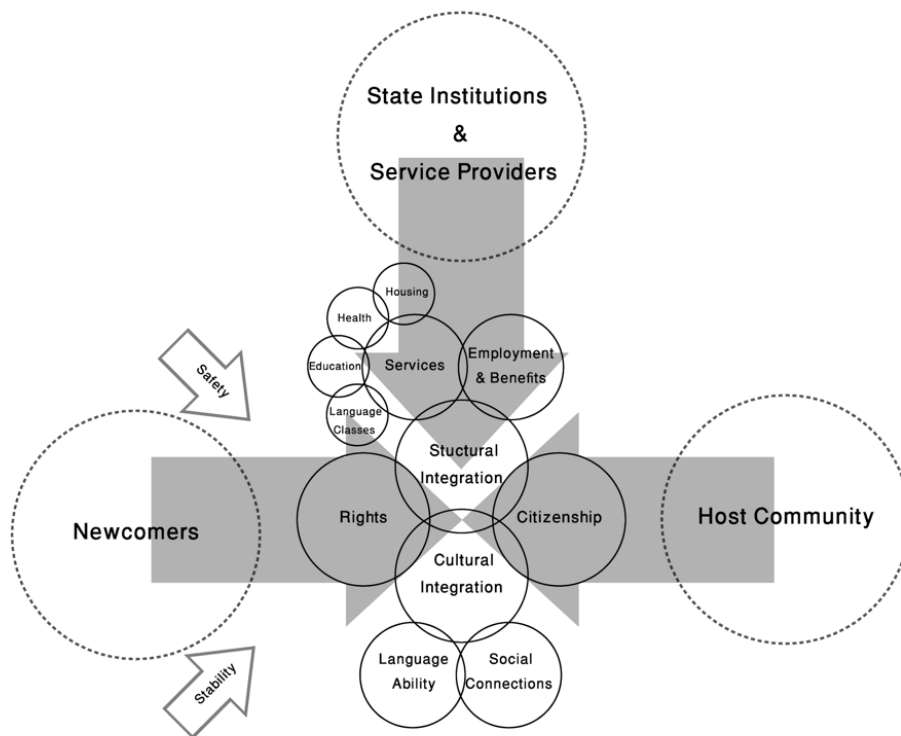
**Language:** Being able to speak the language of the host community is consistently identified by newcomers and the hosts as essential to integration (Ager and Strang, 2008). It is a central focus of the Home Office's plan for newcomers "establishing a life in the UK" (Home Office, 2017c, p. 16).

**Social connections:** Social connections can be understood by the social bonds that link members of a group to one another and the social bridges that connect different social groups. These social bridges can also connect individuals to the state and government services (Ager and Strang, 2008; Putnam, 1993).

### 3.4 Rights and citizenship

It is fundamental to understand citizenship when analysing integration as it shapes understandings of what responsibilities are expected for newcomers in the host society and what rights the newcomers can expect from their new country of citizenship (O'Neill, 2011). Furthermore, the understanding of citizenship and rights underpins assumptions of what successful integration looks like (Ager and Strang, 2008). Navigating the systems to access their entitlements is a central challenge in the process of integration for the newcomers. Thus, the host community can play a central role in facilitating their access, through state institutions, by recognising the rights and citizenship of the newcomers.

**Figure 3.1.** The process of integration. Source: Alraie, M. & Collins H., elaboration based on Ager and Strang (2008); Bosswick and Heckman (2006)



#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1 For the current research the term 'refugee' changes to 'newcomer' upon arrival in their new community

## 4. Findings

Our research compares CS with GS of newcomers under the VPRP. Drawing on cases from rural and urban areas around the UK, we focus on the perspectives of individuals in the host community that have been directly involved in either scheme and those newcomers that have been resettled in the UK under either scheme. These findings can provide insights into the strengths of each scheme.

We have colour coded the answers of the host communities and newcomers to provide an immediate visual signal to help the reader understand which perspective they are encountering (Blue: host community, Purple: newcomers).

The major difference between the two schemes is the level of engagement of the host community in the integration process. In CS, the core group is responsible for and committed to the process of integrating with their sponsored newcomers. All the CS groups divided into sub-groups focussed on an important aspect of integration: education, health, housing, finance/benefits and language/interpretation. Implicit in this relationship is the formation of social connections between sponsors and newcomers. Whereas in the GS, one support worker is allocated in the local authority or outsourced NGO who oversee all aspects of resettlement for up to five families. In the words of a host community member involved in CS: *“I don’t think local authorities have that capacity, even with the funding they have, to offer that level of support. They generally offer one worker to look after five families, that’s what I understand, in most places. One full time worker to do all of that. We have team of 15 looking after one family... we have different roles for each person... I think CS offers a wider opportunity for support and more knowledge base coming in and people with real expertise on different areas,”* (H1, CS, U).

Community groups across the UK are organising to support newcomers under the GS, but there are considerable barriers to them engaging with the integration process. These volunteers are dependent on the willingness of their local authorities or outsourced NGOs to allow this community engagement: *“I think sometimes government-run schemes can be a bit suspicious of local people and their involvement and a bit worried about opening the door to things that could go wrong and the wrong kind of people involved. I understand that’s important and you must take that into consideration. But I think you are starting from a different perspective. You are not starting from this ‘there’s too much risk in the community.’ We know the answers lie in the community we are going to use those people to enhance this integration”* (H1, CS, U).

*Figure 4.1.* shows the interaction of the host community and the newcomers across all dimensions of integration in the CS scheme, both are equally engaged in the process and both are empowered because of this as represented by the larger circles. State institutions play less of a role in the integration process as represented by the smaller circle with a main focus on structural integration.

*Figure 4.2.* depicts the integration process in the GS; both the newcomers and host community have less power to engage in the process of integration because of a lack of connection between them, in some cases because of a lack of community awareness and in others because the structures are not in place for authorities to allow for such community engagement. While the host community has the potential to support and engage in the newcomer’s integration they might not be actively driving the process. Without the support of the host community, the newcomers struggle to access the other dimensions of integration. Although the host communities working with newcomers under the GS were trying to engage in integration, it is inconsistent across communities in the UK and dependent on the willingness of the local authorities to alert them to the needs of the newcomers. The positioning of the host community represents the potential support role for it in the integration process under the GS, but indicates it has no direct responsibility to do so, as in CS. If the host community does not have a clear role defined in GS the host community does not undertake direct responsibility of the newcomers’ integration. Due to safeguarding restrictions it is a challenge for the local authorities and outsourced NGOs to allow the host community to play a leading role in the process. It might also depend on the willingness of the front line workers in NGOs or the councils to involve the host community and their capacity to keep on top of safeguarding the newcomers while engaging with the host community.

### 4.1 Safety and stability

*“The difference between a house and a home is the difference between a place to stay and a place to live. A home is a place of safety, security and stability, the lack of which was the main reason refugees left their country of origin”* (Dutch Refugee Council/ECRE 2001: 5).

Figure 4.1. The process of integration in community sponsorship. Source: Alraie, M. and Collins, H.

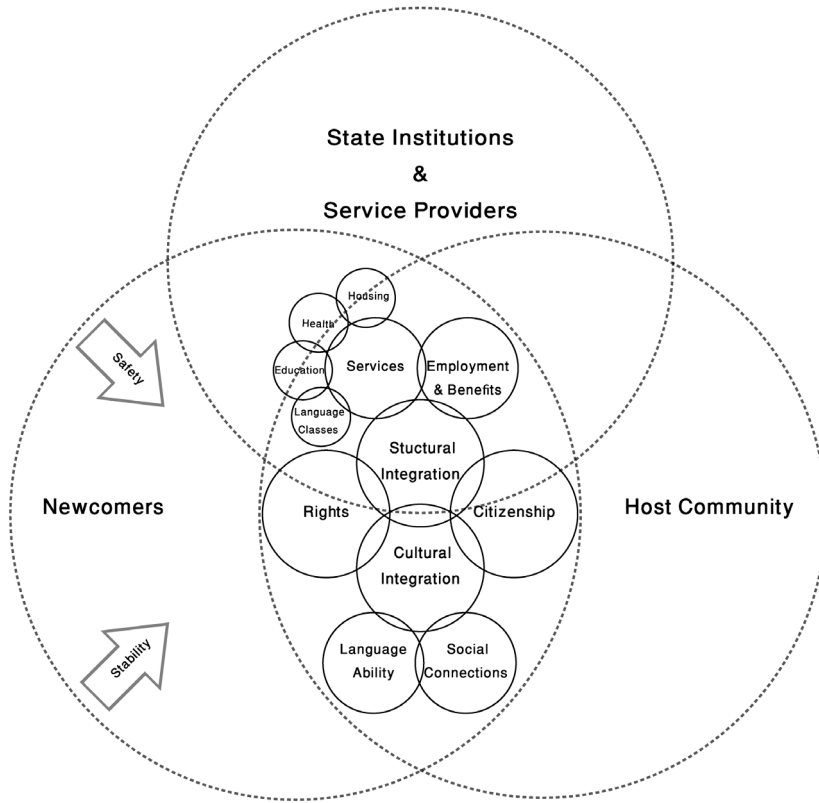
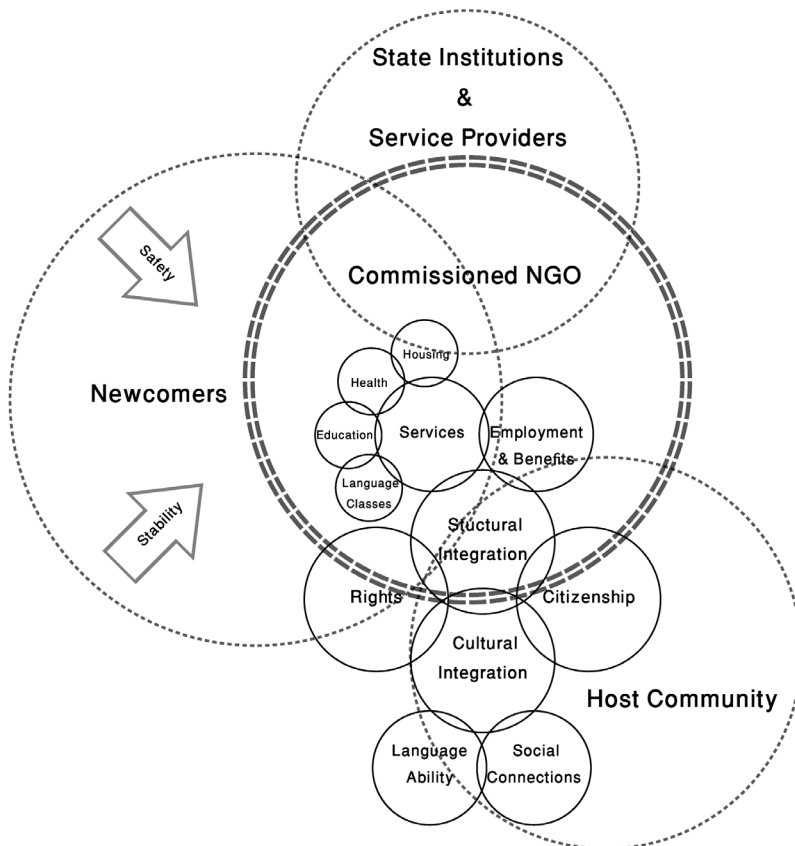


Figure 4.2. The process of integration in government-led resettlement. Source: Alraie, M. and Collins, H.



Safety and stability are seen by Ager and Strang as facilitators to all other aspects of integration (2008). Although these factors were not initially articulated in the current framework they emerged as important factors in the interviews with the newcomers and host community members. The sense of safety and stability is associated with housing, the social environment of the neighbourhood (Ager & Strang, 2008) and the long-term economic benefits and social connections accessible through employment (Woolcock, 1998).

Being safe and stable are essential conditions to start the process of integration. Without these minimum conditions newcomers can feel unsafe, unwelcome and threatened by foreign systems of governance and cultures that work as barriers to integration. This was recognised by the host community: *"For a family arriving here, I think integration for them would be to stand on their own feet in a community and feel confident they are part of it, that they are welcomed and have access to all the local facilities and services that are on offer. That they don't feel different or the odd one out. That they feel as a part of the community as everyone else and that they are accepted for whatever differences they may bring"* (H1, CS, U)<sup>1</sup>.

From the newcomer perspectives trust in state institutions, outsourced NGOs, and host communities increases feelings of stability and safety. Trust can be affected by how efficiently and empathetically their needs are responded to. In some interviews, it was noted that the support from the host community creates more trust than the support received from the state or outsourced NGOs. *"The community members are committed to helping us by all means they have, we just need to be reasonable and ask for our needs, then they will follow up, and if they could not help, we are totally sure that they did their best. However, if we go and ask the organisation, it takes a long time to get any response, then we need to follow up, at some point we fed up with that, and our dignity does not allow us to keep pushing"* (NC1, GS, R).

This trust also depends on the accuracy of the information provided by the outsourced NGOs to the newcomers. *"Once we arrived they gave us a 'welcome package' of 100 pages of information in English, the first night I did not sleep reading everything, a lot of important and useful information. When I went to the social worker and asked him about the residency and how to receive it I found out that the written information was not accurate and had many fatal errors. For instance, that it said that we have the right to be issued a refugee travel document when at that time we were not entitled to"* (NC2, GS, U).

Expectations upon arrival of newcomers to their new country can also impact feelings of safety and stability. Those expectations seem to be driven by different factors, which include the level of quality of life they had before their arrival. *"When we compare how our life changed, it is really significant. We*

*lived for four years in a camp, real camp, in a tent exposed to rain, cold, and very hot weather. Tough living conditions, but here, each kid has their own bed!"* (NC3, CS, R).

## 4.2 Rights and citizenship

In both schemes host community members work as advocates for the newcomers assisting them to access the services they are entitled to. In CS the core group are functionally responsible for the newcomers, while in GS the community are recognising the gaps in the government provision and trying to fill them: *"There's a general understanding of 'this is how things work.' I think helping people to negotiate these things, particularly finding work, feeling like your schools and all that are working for your children, I think it's important for people to feel confident in these things...it's about education, work, health, housing, friendships... if you have those five then you're going to feel you belong and you're settled"* (H1, CS, U).

In both schemes, feeling part of the community and considering the UK as a new home also depends on how comfortable the newcomers feel to practice their own cultural and religion practices. *"We have no other choice: although we might never feel that we totally belong to the UK somehow, we have to consider it as our new home as far as we feel we are able to practice our traditions and religion, because that is how we keep our principles and identity"* (NC4, GS, R). Making a positive contribution to the British society were perceived as a duty in response to the protection, services and support received. *"As the British people stand with us, and provide us with the available services, we have that kind of feeling of belonging in a way that makes us willing and wishing to give something in return. Therefore, we should integrate with the people here and consider the UK as our own country by participating in maintaining it safe and clean for instance, as well as helping people... We say in Syria, as you have eaten fruits of a country, you should show your loyalty and be devoted to serving it"* (NC5, GS, R).

Accessing basic services is a challenge in the UK even for those representing the majority population. Newcomers face a greater challenge than most in participation and representation of full citizenship. Furthermore, although on paper newcomers may have nearly the same rights as UK citizens, they require more support than other UK citizens: *"Unlike the Canadian scheme [where] they take people who are most educated, we need to make sure that the British system is equipped to support the people who are less educated and 'most vulnerable'"* (H2, CS, U). If the newcomers have the backing of their sponsors they feel confident navigating the systems of their entitlements. CS has more potential than the GS to ensure newcomers achieve rights and citizenship, not because the government does not recognise these rights, but because the level of support required in attaining them is beyond government's current capacity.

Newcomers reflected the difficulties they faced in attaining rights and entitlements and the different support they required to navigate the system. *"I wish officials here to understand this, please, please do not compare us with other vulnerable people who lived here for a long time. Apart from the current problems we have such as language, cultural shocks, and vulnerability, we have too many other problems and concerns, we all suffered from war and bloodbath and persecution, some of us have trauma, family members at risk, loss of loved ones to war, our suffering started seven years ago and is still going on, even if we are safe here. Please do not compare us with others. I understand and really appreciate we have same rights as citizens, but sometimes we need more consideration, attention, customisation, and flexibility when accessing services"* (NC6, GS, U).

Newcomers resettled through GS explained how they acted to ensure accountability of their services providers. Feeling dissatisfied and disrespected with the level of service they were receiving from the outsourced NGO they got together at an event they had been invited to by the NGO who were showcasing their impact on resettled refugees. In the presence of media and officials from the Home Office, the newcomers expressed their concerns with the low-quality of services provided. This case of direct action by the newcomers to access their rights resulted in a meeting between the newcomers and the director of the NGO who has responded positively.

### 4.3 Structural integration

#### Housing

*"The problem with it is that you are trying to launch this wonderful new scheme [CS] in a country that boasts the most dysfunctional housing market in the developed world"* (H10, CS, U).

Housing is a huge barrier for communities involved in either scheme in resettling newcomers. Even in GS the community plays a huge role in finding homes. All interviewees drew attention to the housing crisis and the tension that exists between giving state housing to newcomers over those citizens who have been on the waiting list.

*"We found that [the community] are anxious about two things; terrorism and taking from the state housing stock,"* (H7, CS, R). In the GS they have been reluctant to house newcomers in state housing and it has fallen to volunteer groups to source alternative houses for the local authorities. These groups campaign for landlords to offer their properties for refugees. In one rural county, a volunteer-led refugee group sourced all five of the houses for the five families their local authority has accepted under the GS.

Once the newcomers arrive landlords have guaranteed tenants for two years. In rural parts of the UK, where housing is cheaper, letting to newcomers can be an advantage, whereas in the cities, where the market is competitive, landlords will receive less income by renting to newcomers.

Local authorities come up with their own housing standards based on the Home Offices' minimum requirements (Jamroz and Tyler, 2016). There seem to be varied experiences around the country in the selection of suitable houses under the GS. For example, one community member remarked that there was *"no consideration for where the families will live and the closest medical providers"* (H5, GS, R). Particularly in rural areas there are also problems of mobility, accessing halal meat and mosques. In CS, sponsors live close to the newcomers and can give them support that goes beyond the resources local authorities can provide: *"We are there for the long term, we don't finish at 5 o'clock, we work at weekends, we can be 24/7... that's the other restriction the local authority has"* (H1, CS, U). This interaction of the services and social connection emphasises the crucial role of the host community in the process of integration with the newcomers.

#### Education

Newcomers arriving from war zones face barriers to accessing education upon arrival due to a lack of necessary certification. In both schemes there is a role for the local community in helping the newcomers access education. For example, a boy resettled via GS has been receiving after-school math tutorials to get him up-to-speed with his peers. These tutorials are also helping him to improve his language abilities. It was a great example of the local community in the GS going beyond their requirements to help the newcomers integration.

All newcomer children attend the local schools, however, under CS the children have the extra support of the sponsored group to assist in the transition to school: *"I think you can't really beat [CS] as a way to integrate... We've got kids of similar ages who have to start school. We know how this stuff works as we have done it with our own kids. We are going to be able to help and support and understand the kind of stuff they are going through... when you just have employees, sometimes brought in from outside, they don't live locally, they don't understand the local dynamics or have those experiences themselves. I'd say this is better for integration"* (H1, CS, U).

According to a host, their local community and schools benefit from new cultures and experiences that the children bring: *"these kids are bringing so much to the schools and they teach even their teachers about the Syrian crisis, open their eyes to another culture, it enriches the entire community,"* (H8, CS, R).



## Health

Some newcomers arrive with significant health issues. While they all receive health services through the NHS, navigating the system in a foreign language and culture is extremely difficult. In both schemes we saw examples of the host community supporting newcomers in accessing healthcare. The GS requires local authorities to take the initiative to involve the host community but it does not always happen. Whereas in CS, the host community is not only dedicated to supporting the family but can draw on their social connections and help the newcomers access the best care possible.

The NHS in the UK is accessible to all newcomers, however, not all newcomers are able to receive the services the same way. For example, interpreters are not always available and there are long waiting list for medical appointments. The way the NHS functions can be difficult to understand for the newcomers and most of the interviewees expressed difficulties being able to follow up their cases. This is one example of a GS case: *"A victim of torture with learning difficulties since before the war in Syria was referred to learning difficulties services, afterwards he was referred to mental health services. However, without meeting him mental health workers decided it was not their specialisation and sent him back to the learning difficulties centre. The place where he was referred to was only for people above 25, while he is younger, then he was referred to another health centre, and the referrals kept taking place without receiving any proper service or confirmation of the diagnosis. This lasted for more than two years, the last appointment was six months ago when they were told that it was learning difficulties, and that they should receive a letter within few days, which they have not. We are fed up with this case. I am doing others jobs while I have my own family, and I do not have time for all of this, but when there is no one to help us we help each other"* (NC6, GS, U).

In the CS cases in this research, there was appropriate support and translation to assist the newcomers in accessing healthcare and navigating the system. *"We receive good health care, the kids got vaccinations, and we visited a dentist, one of the kid needs an operation for his nose, we received significant help from the community group who are following up as it is very complicated for us to understand alone"* (NC7, CS, R).

It should be noted that the health services are the same in both schemes. However, the the support provided to access the services is different. Health needs vary considerably among the newcomers. In CS, the community are functionally aware of the need to support newcomers to access and navigate the NHS. While in the GS it depends on local authorities being willing to allow community members to help.

## Employment and Benefits

*"For some people maybe having a job is part of their wellbeing but maybe not for somebody else...everybody will be different... I think part of integration is respecting people's differences, human beings are complex and we have to respect that"* (H1, CS, U).

Consistent with past research (Phillimore, 2012) the host community saw employment as crucial to integration: *"I hope... the children grow up still being able to respect their parents, seeing their parents getting on and getting a reasonable job and meeting their potential"* (H7, CS, R).

Navigating the Job Centre requires confidence and perseverance that many newcomers will not have the strength or skills for at first. Finding a job when you have limited social networks is difficult. A power dynamic can exist between the newcomer and Job Centre employees, especially if the newcomers are not familiar with the systems and may fear losing their benefits. Under CS this is less likely to occur as sponsors are committed to assisting the newcomers through the Job Centre's processes: *"He's well equipped to make a good life for himself but it requires a lot of support and I think without CS he'd have no chance... the world of work in this country is a ruthless world for a lot of people"* (H10, CS, U). In the GS there are challenges to social connection between the newcomers and the host community, making it more difficult for newcomers to find employment opportunities and for the host community to be made aware of the need.

The criteria for resettlement of Syrian newcomers through VPRP is based on their vulnerability which can impact their English acquisition, or prevent them from working due to physical or mental capability. Thus, the benefits system is usually the main source for income for newcomers. Gaining access to these entitlements presents some challenges especially due to the large amount of paperwork and cultural differences in welfare systems. The interviewed newcomers reported long delays in receiving pensions or disability support due to a misunderstanding around bank accounts (NC, GS, M; NC, GS, M).

Jobcentre Plus in the UK is a government agency which offers employment services and social security allowances. However, a newcomer stated that he received little help for finding a job: *"Although I speak good English and have been going to the jobcentre for more than seven months, it never helped me to find a job, not even write a CV, I think we are not priority for them because our allowances, as refugees by VPRP is secured for one year, regardless what services are provided"* (NC8, GS, U). Other examples included feeling pressured to travel long distances to new jobs that paid below minimum wage out of fear that benefits would be cut (NC9, GS, U).

In contrast, in the cases of CS, the community groups' networks are involved in finding employment opportunities for the newcomers. Most importantly for the urgent economic needs, all these paper work and applications related to the social security benefits were well understood and followed-up by the community members themselves to ensure that the newcomers receive their entitlements as soon as possible. It must be acknowledged that in the case of CS the newcomers in this research they had all arrived within the year so employment was still not a main priority and it is yet to be seen how CS compares to GS with relation to employment statistics.

#### 4.4 Cultural integration

Broad cultural knowledge beyond language ability, such as local customs and traditions has been identified as enabling the integration process (Ager and Strang, 2008). Understanding the different cultures that are involved in the integration process needs to come from the host community, newcomers and state. We split cultural integration into language ability and social connections but we acknowledge that it is more than just these factors. It also encompasses an everyday understanding of how to access services, respect and understand the law and standard behaviours that are deemed acceptable in certain situations.

##### Language

Language is the clearest indicator of integration and a priority for the host community: *"trying to get them fluent as soon as possible"* (H10, CS, U). Without language access to all other dimensions of integration is challenging: *"language learning is vital as you cannot build relationships without it and it is functionally important for employment"* (H3, CS+GS, U).

In both schemes newcomers are required to attend ESOL classes. Under the GS funds are available for newcomers to attend ESOL classes at a local English language provider (Jamroz & Tyler, 2016). The ESOL provision in the GS is unable to support the learning needs of the newcomers – in one case, extra English tuition was provided by volunteers in the community where they identified this need. Here, the classes provided in the standard ESOL schools were large, predominantly made up of Arabic speakers and had a set curriculum, inflexible to different start dates. Without social connections between newcomers and the host community, learning English is more difficult.

Under CS, newcomers are required to attend 10 hours of ESOL per week for the first 12 weeks paid for and arranged by the sponsoring group (Home Office, 2017c). The CS groups interviewed had trained English teachers as members of the core group who committed to teaching the parents each week. *"Our own education team has delivered*

*bespoke, very customised English lessons to the parents... ESOL college is okay but it hasn't been as important because it's curriculum-led which cannot be moved with new people coming in... it hasn't been as valuable as what the group themselves have delivered"* (H10, CS, U).

Lastly, in CS interpreters are required to be available for the first 12 months (Home Office, 2017c). Interpreters made up the core members of the sponsoring team and sometimes advise the other group members on cultural issues. In the GS interpreters are outsourced and called up when required and are not consistently on hand to provide support, creating further barriers for the newcomers in progressing through other dimensions of the integration framework

The quality of ESOL providers varies from place to place. Some newcomers in GS claimed that the traditional ESOL lessons were not as useful as the one-to-one support from they also received from their local community members in terms of learning the language. This is significant as language acquisition is central to the integration process as emphasised by the Home Office's resettlement plans. In CS the core group draws on their resources and experience of offering tailored lessons to the families.

##### Social connections

*"CS is an opportunity to make openings and build relationships between communities... it can help in changing the narrative of how we see refugees"* (H3, CS+GS, U).

Social connection was consistently recognised by the host community as crucial to integration: *"to belong and to be part of society, and build a wide network of relationships outside their own culture... [to] maintain their own identity, to have that respected and valued while at the same time being enriched by a sustaining web of relationships"* (H3, CS+GS, U).

The major difference between the two schemes' capacity for integration is social connection: *"CS should be more successful because of people being involved. While in the GS, people were informed to stay away from the families because the local authorities want to protect them, which doesn't really help them at all,"* (H8, CS, R). Another CS member remarked; *"having this [CS] group, who have all the networks you need to integrate beyond that group... CS is just the starting point to help newcomers broaden their networks"* (H2, CS, U).

Social connections can significantly impact feelings of security and remove barriers to integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). This is where the host community plays a crucial role in providing the extra support that goes beyond what the government can provide. For example, one community sponsor reflected on the first weeks of the family's resettlement: *"a number of people in this big extended team are saying, "oh*

*yes I've bumped into them at the [supermarket]"... they are taking themselves out to all sorts of events and they see people they have met already" (H7, CS, R).*

Ager and Strang (2008) findings support the positive effect experiencing friendliness from the resettled community can have on the newcomers' perceptions, feelings of security and of being welcome. *"For me integration is really about what happened with the neighbours' event... the way in which people who were anxious and uncertain about what this would bring to their road are already going "look they're just an ordinary family" ... we asked [the family] the various things they wanted to do and they pulled meeting the neighbours second to top... they want to do integration more quickly... it is about working with both sides to give everybody space to feel safe" (H7, CS, R).* This emphasises the multi-directional nature of integration; it is not just the newcomers adapting to the host's culture, but the community changes as well.

A GS newcomer family had not met their neighbours after a year of living there. While in Syria it was a priority to ensure good feelings with neighbours and safety *"I wish if our neighbours were informed that good and peaceful people who were displaced from their homes are coming and will need some solidarity and support from their neighbours" (NC10, GS, R).* *"Sometimes we feel afraid to say 'hi' to our neighbours. Not all of them seem to be friendly or smile at us. Probably some of them do not want us to speak to or communicate with them at all" (NC4, GS, R).* In a CS example the newly arrived family expressed their wish to meet with their new neighbours. A get-together was arranged and afterwards they said; *"when we walk outdoor we do not feel as strangers, seems like everyone knows us, and they greet us and smile" (NC11, CS, R).*

Building strong social connections is dependent on location and language which can in some instances make the newcomers feel isolated. In one GS example a family felt it was strange they were resettled in a small village with no other Arabic speaker. Whereas in another case of CS also in a small village the family felt it was an opportunity to learn English and build new types of friendships. These examples emphasise the individual perspectives, feelings and attitudes that impact on all stakeholders integration process.

## 4.5 Strengthens host community

*"Integration from either side to understand the other's culture, usually used to refer to when other people adapt to your culture, however, it means participation as well," (H6, GS, R).* For the host community participating in the integration process is essential. Not only for the wellbeing of the newcomers, but it creates new experiences and learning for all those involved. Engaging with diversity strengthens communities and changes perspectives and stereotypes

by opening doors to interactions with people they may not otherwise meet: *"the experience of CS helps the local community to understand more about Syrians directly from the people, not from the media. We learnt how we are the same, we have differences but also many similarities, and we got a picture of what Syria was before, and their culture" (H2, CS, U).* This idea of learning from the newcomers was consistently recognised by the host community: *"what [they] bring to a community far exceeds what they take" (H8, CS, R).* CS offers people the chance to have these experiences, where under the GS they may not have the opportunity *"to open [their] eyes to other worlds and ways of doing things... it is important to get outside your comfort zone, this is where good learning happens... [from a] sense of discomfort and having to look further" (H3, CS+GS, U).*

Working on the CS process as a group was recognised as another positive outcome of CS for those involved. One described the experiences as *"transformative" (H10, CS, U),* and another described; *"the effect [CS] has had on us is probably the biggest success of the whole thing really... you are supporting the family and you can see the effect it's having on them, but on many levels it has given us a common purpose as a group... we have interacted with all sorts of people that we haven't met before. Taxi drivers who brought us back from the airport who heard what we were doing and then didn't charge us the bill... the local Lebanese restaurant gave us all this food for free and they kept saying thank you to us... it's just created community" (H1, CS, U).*

In CS the sponsoring groups displayed huge respect and understanding of the importance of the newcomers having the right to maintain their own culture. Whereas, under the GS the newcomers fit into an existing system. *"You're working with people who are doing their jobs rather than their passion, that is something that the council and the government cannot provide, it is not only about resources but about the community" (H2, CS, U).* CS groups worked within their local communities to prepare them and address any uncertainties before the newcomers arrived. In the GS there is great variation across local authorities in terms of engaging local communities.

## 4.6 Feeling of ownership

In addition to social connection, CS is a sense of ownership that comes from responsibility in CS. *"This is the thing of our time that we can't ignore we have a responsibility to do something about," (H1, CS, U);* CS offers local people the opportunity to help. *"People just naturally want to help each other... if everyone has that desire in the first place and they've got the responsibility that goes with it. No you can't walk away, you signed up for this, we are officially it. The difference between success and failure for this family is us... you've got a combination of a natural desire to help people and a factual responsibility, then I think integration*

*is bound to follow from those two things,"* (H10, CS, U). All those involved in CS felt a sense of pride that they could respond; *"what we have seen here is people in the community being so pleased that they can do something and so proud"* (H7, CS, R). A culture of ownership in communities creates resilience (Friedman, 2016).

The participation of host community leads to positive impact on the process of integration. Such participation can take place in different ways in both CS and GS. However, under CS the role of the host community in the process of integration is clearly structured, which leads to more efficient management of allocated resources, effectively accelerating the process through clear communication channels, well planned flexible interventions and a sense of responsibility of the host community.

## 4.7 Strengths of CS from the newcomers perspective

### Effective response

From the newcomers perspective, an effective response to their needs depends upon treatment, communication, time and flexibility. Our findings show that CS has more capacity to respond to in such a way because it does not depend on overstretched and rigid state institutions or outsourced NGOs: *"We were treated as numbers, they have nothing more than check lists with boxes to tick-off, that is what is their job about, to work from nine to five, from Monday to Friday. Whatever simple need you have, you have to make an appointment in advance, they need five to seven days to respond, and, most of the time, they need a lot of time to come back to you after you are asked to fill applications and do a lot of paperwork. However, when you have people from the host community willing to help, they respond promptly with no complications, they understand your suffering and act accordingly, even if they are not able to help, you feel that you are heard carefully and someone cares about you"* (NC11, GS, U).

### Holistic approach

In GS there is more focus on structural integration dimensions at the expense of the cultural ones. CS seems to be a more holistic approach addressing all integration dimen-

sions, especially the cultural ones due to the deep community engagement and the wider social network offered by the CS group. Two families of newcomers have been resettled in different rural areas through each scheme. Both interviewees spoke almost no English. When asked about their social networks, their answers were very different: the family who came through the CS were confident to focus on strengthening their social network with British people rather than with Syrian community. *"We don't mind having other families from our home country, however, I think it is better now as we are surrounded mostly by British people. Probably it is better to keep our communication with them the most. This way we can learn the language faster but if we have more families from our home, then we would be speaking our language with them"* (NC12, CS, R). In contrast, the other family who came through the GS was socially isolated, struggling to build relationships and have a social life or any interaction not only with other Syrians but also others in their community. *"We just wish there were more Syrian families in this neighbourhood, or Arabic speakers, we need to have some friends, some people to spend time with and do social activities"* (NC13, GS, R).

The CS family had the conditions to socialise with British people and take advantage of practicing English which enhanced cultural interaction. The GS did not have the capacity or structures in place to offer this level of social support. However, a local community Refugee Welcome group had done a lot of organising and were in touch with the family and working to help address their needs. This is a good example of how an active local community can support newcomers in GS. This engagement can only be facilitated through the outsourced NGO.

### Multi-directional interaction

Interaction is a key element of integration, the difference between CS and GS lies in their capacities to create more interaction between newcomers and host community. The interaction between host community, newcomers and service providers is stronger in CS due to the nature of the scheme, while the GS is unable to offer the same level of interaction. The CS group as a member of the host community has the will and the resources to interact with the newcomers because it is inherent in their function. More interaction between the newcomers and the host community and state allows integration to proceed, especially in the cultural dimensions. The CS fosters a 'multi-directional' nature of integration and allows for engagement with diversity.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Coding system to keep the interviewees anonymous. H = host community; NC = newcomer; CS= community sponsorship; GS = government-led scheme; U = urban; R = rural.

Therefore, "H1, CS, U" refers to the host community member number 1 involved in a community sponsorship in an urban area.

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## 5. Conclusion

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This comparison of experiences in resettling newcomers through CS or in GS demonstrates that CS has a greater potential to address all the dimensions of integration. Under current cuts and increase stress on public services, navigating the system of entitlements is increasingly difficult for people who are already precarious and marginalised, such as newcomers. Extra support is required for the 'most vulnerable' beyond what the government provides to access their rights. Although CS may be seen as another way to save on social spending, it offers local communities the chance to take an active role helping newcomers. CS is better equipped to respond to individual needs and differences than the GS. This is in line with findings on the private-sponsorship of refugees in Canada (Hyndman et al., 2017). CS is an adaptable, human response which facilitates the multidimensional process of integration.

When newcomers feel safe and stable in their host community, integration becomes easier, facilitated by social connections with the host community and the provision of basic rights through state institutions. In CS the so-

cial connection dimension of integration is much stronger than in the GS because of the functional responsibility and commitment of the sponsoring community. The GS has limited potential for social connection because of the inherent nature of government systems and the devolved responsibility which results from outsourcing services. In the current study, we saw numerous examples of active community members engaging with newcomers in the GS. This shows the potential in the GS for an active engagement of the host community but this requires a willingness of the local authorities and can be hindered by the way safeguarding procedures are often implemented. In both examples ordinary citizens must be willing to volunteer their time to help integrate the newcomers into their local communities.

Host communities work with newcomers to show them how things work so newcomers build trust and understanding of the systems of their new government. At the same time the host community changes; stereotypes are broken and the community cultures adapt and are strengthened by their new members.

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## 6. Recommendations

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Both CS and GS are likely to continue to play a very important role in future. The GS should find ways to more systematically involve the host community in the resettlement process by going beyond the risk averse attitude towards local residents' involvement. This is likely to require a bigger investment in brokering these relationships initially but it may increase the chance of a successful integration process with higher benefits on society in the long-term. The GS should also adapt more to the specific needs of each family rather than assuming that the same approach would work with every family.

While maintaining its flexibility and diversity, the CS needs to ensure some consistency through different sponsor groups. The state or an institution mandated by the state can play an important role in exchanging good practices and provide training and guidelines to community groups willing to host refugees in their communities. Overall, increasing communication channels, collaboration and social connection between sponsoring groups, NGOs and the local authorities will insure the sustainability, resilience and success of both schemes.

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