

# Resettlement of Syrian Refugees in West Dunbartonshire

*Lessons for partnership and community  
engagement*

Dr Claire Bynner

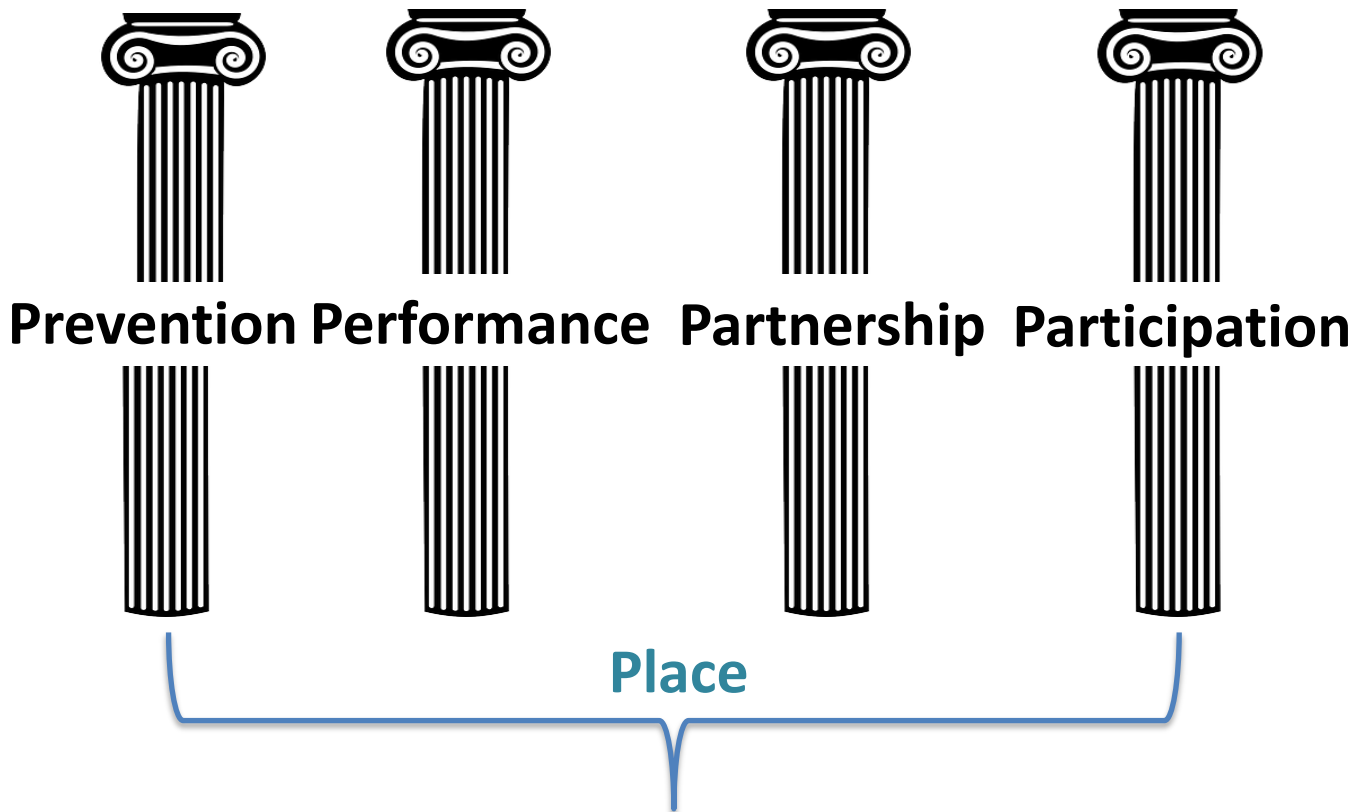
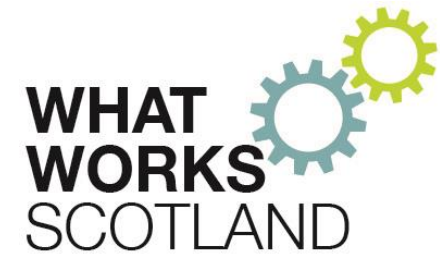
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The purpose of WWS is to use evidence to inform public service reform and transform public services for all of Scotland's communities to flourish



COMMISSION ON  
THE FUTURE DELIVERY  
OF PUBLIC SERVICES



# A collaborative research project



Case Study

February 2018

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## Resettlement of Syrian Refugees in West Dunbartonshire

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Dr Gareth Mulvey (University of Glasgow)

Dr Claire Bynner (What Works Scotland)

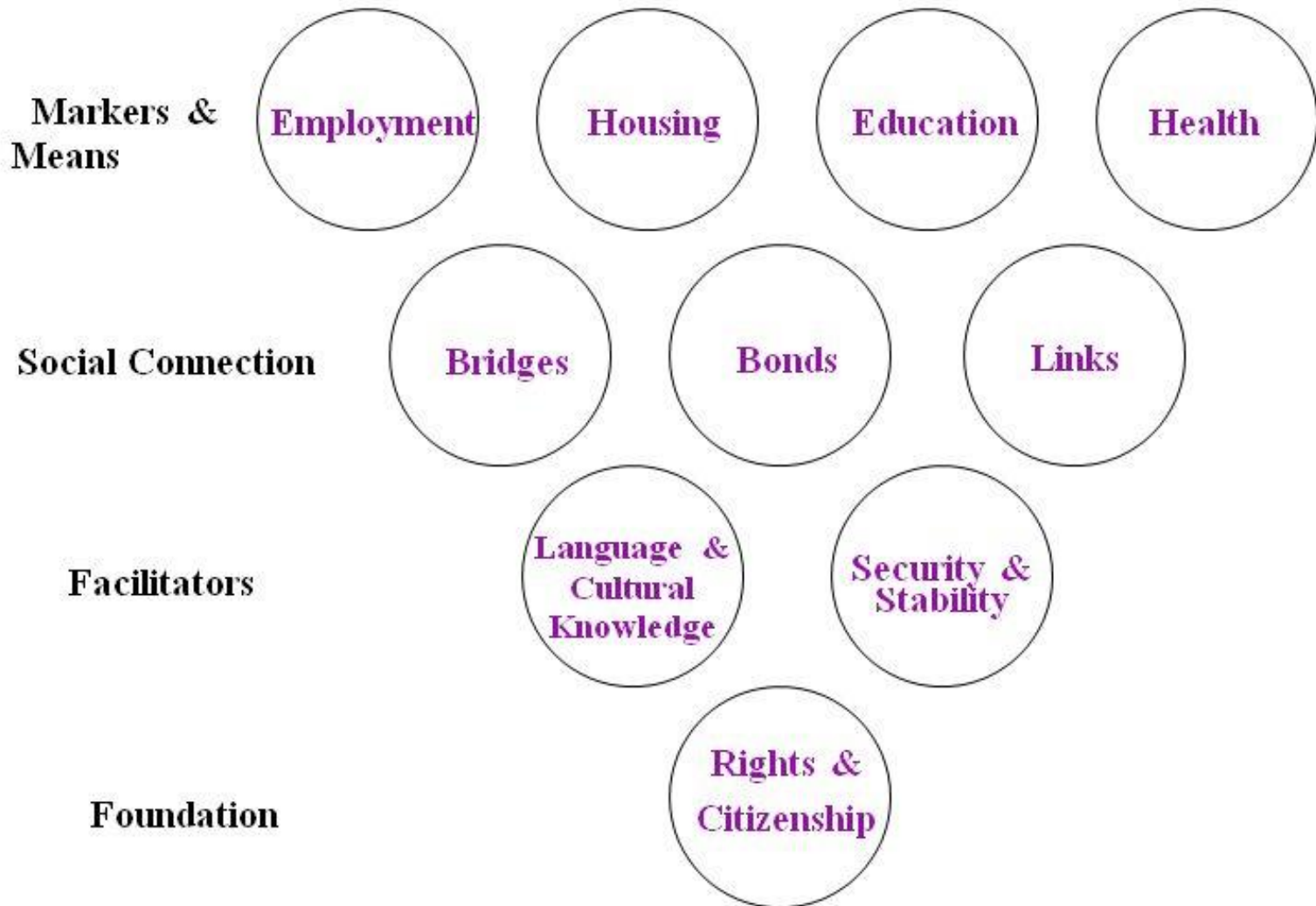
Nina Murray (Scottish Refugee Council)

Professor Nicholas Watson (What Works Scotland)



# *Indicators of Integration Framework*

*(Ager & Strang, 2008)*



# VPRS in West Dunbartonshire

- Under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, 87 Syrian refugees were resettled in West Dunbartonshire by the end of 2016
- The Council established a Resettlement Coordinator and a multi-agency group to facilitate initial resettlement
- Involvement from Housing, Health and Social Care Partnership, Police Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions, Education and the Third sector
- A new Resettlement Team with 2 bi-lingual members of staff

# Data Collection

- Case study purpose
  - to deepen understanding of resettlement in a context with no previous experience of refugee integration
  - explore issues that are difficult for refugees to report to statutory services
- 47 documents analysed – meetings, action plans, briefings, correspondence, procedures
- 11 refugee interviews : 6 men; 5 women
  - Arabic interpreter and carried out at participants' homes, audio recorded with the participants' consent
- 9 service professionals - HSCP; Community Planning, Housing, Education, and the third sector
  - 6 frontline roles ; 3 strategic roles.
- Interviews conducted between Nov 2016 and Feb 2017

# A Successful Programme

- In general the resettlement programme was very successful
- Employees involved in the resettlement programme showed very **high levels of commitment and professionalism**
- **Community preparation with established tenants** was a break from normal practice
- The refugees felt welcomed and appreciated the effort of staff
- **Learning** – *engage early with local communities, build on existing relationships to encourage a positive response to arrival of refugees*



*“The welcoming was perfect, it couldn’t have been any better. From the airport, to the hotel, to this apartment, to the Council, the treatment was perfect.”*

*“God loves us that he brought us to [Resettlement Team member] ... She’s a kind person, she loves us, she tries to help us as much as she can... in general the Council has stood with us from the beginning until now.”*

*“[I’m] very worried about [my] brother... he’s at risk... in Lebanon... I’m very settled with my family, but it’s family members... they are back in Syria and Lebanon, very much in risky situations... so you’re being distracted completely, you’ll not be able to keep focussed on the learning [in English classes] ... I mean [we are] shattered, [we] keep thinking about family.”*

# Social Bridges

*“... a couple of times, one of the dads... came up to collect his kids, so [I] invited him to a cup of coffee and then he accepted and [came] in. But [when] he was talking we couldn't understand him. Of course, this is the barrier.”*

*“At the beginning, when we greet [the neighbours], or say something to them, they didn’t reply to us, because they were timid. But then, when they realised that we are peaceful people, and we are good people, they started to talk to us more.”*

*“[I’m] a full-time mum... I take the children to school ...and then [I have] plenty of jobs to do like laundry and cleaning the flat... and so many things... [I have been] trying to communicate with other mums, but [I’m] still feeling like there is some sort of barrier... [I] feel isolated sometimes.”*

# Service response

*'business as usual' or proactive and innovative?*

- **Housing**
  - excellent preparation and arrival support
  - problems with **access for Syrians to the housing repairs service**
- **Health & Social Care**
  - fast to set up GP appointments
  - **interpretation services variable or inadequate;**
  - **no provision of specialist trauma services**

# Service response

- **ESOL** –
  - language learning important to Syrians, crèche facilities provided
  - **community-based learning was perceived to be too informal**
- **Schools**
  - innovative and responsive to needs of children
  - could do more to **engage parents in understanding the education system**
  - *see the WWS & Save the Children research coming up...*
- **Resettlement Team**
  - trying to **strike a balance between support and fostering independence**
  - Syrians need **cultural mediation** to explain the differences between Syrian and Scottish approaches to service provision



# Learning and insights

- Promote active citizenship and opportunities for new arrivals to build social connections
- Pay attention to gender differences and barriers
- Review the provision of services for refugees suffering from trauma, torture and violence
- Provide interpretation services across all key services - esp. Housing repairs, GP surgeries
- Foster independence by improving mainstream service provision
- Ensure all local services are responsive to the needs of new and vulnerable groups by promoting cultural understanding

# Postscript

- Access to housing repairs, GP services and trauma provision - issues are ongoing
- Young Syrians with low levels of education are more isolated - there is need for more support with sharing practice on ESOL literacies
- Welcoming and accepting refugees in deprived communities remains a challenge.
- Funding provided by SG for ESOL promotes college-based learning over community-based learning
- There is no funding for refugees who arrive outside of the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme
- DWP – a recent hardening of attitudes towards refugees and increased focus on compliance and sanctioning

A scenic landscape featuring a dirt road winding through a green, hilly area. In the foreground, a cow is grazing on the grass. The background shows a valley with a river, a bridge, and distant hills under a blue sky with light clouds.

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na  
daoine

*Under the shelter of each other,  
people survive*