

# Strategic Framework

# 2023 → 2028



Our vision and mission

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# Introduction

**We are Scotland's national refugee charity. Every year, we support thousands of men, women and children as they rebuild their lives in Scotland.**

We believe that everyone seeking safety should receive the same warm welcome and respect, no matter where they're from or how they arrived.

This strategic plan sets out what we hope to achieve over the next five years and how we aim to do it. It has been shaped by our vision, mission and values and the input of refugee communities across Scotland. We would like to thank everyone involved for their insights and contributions.

In this plan, we use the word 'refugees' in its broadest sense to include refugees, people seeking asylum, people arriving through resettlement schemes, people seeking protection through displacement or exploitation and people who have been granted leave to remain in the UK.

**My body arrived in Scotland,  
but I felt like I had lost my mind  
on the way.**

A young person supported by the  
Scottish Guardianship Service

Quotes from staff, volunteers and service users appear throughout this document. In some cases, names have been changed or omitted to protect those involved.



# Our vision and mission

**Our vision is of a Scotland in which all people seeking refugee protection are welcome.**

**Our mission is to build a society where people of all ages are protected, find safety and support, have their human rights and dignity respected and are able to achieve their full potential.**

**Creating an environment in which people feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves is your responsibility as a leader. But before we stand out, we should be clear what we stand for.**

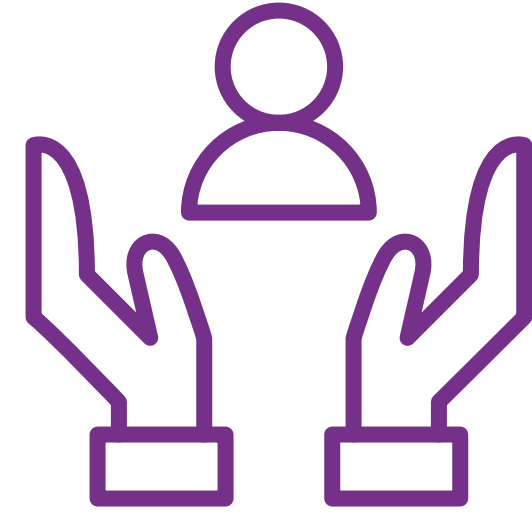
**Tandy, Graduate of the  
New Scots Leadership Programme**

# Our values



## Respect and dignity

We believe everyone has the right to be treated with respect, dignity and empathy. We respect our people and invest in our staff and volunteers to help them realise their potential.



## Empowering and enabling

We value people's lived experiences. We seek to empower people to access and exercise their rights, and enable them to participate fully in their new homes and communities.



## Courageous and resilient

We are an independent charity committed to upholding the human rights of refugees. We are courageous and resilient when advocating for refugee rights.



## Creative and transparent

We aim for excellence and best quality in everything we do, valuing transparency, creativity, participation and learning.

# Our unique role

**We work within an increasingly complex and interconnected system of services and policies which can be both welcoming to, and hostile towards, people seeking safety.**

In this ever-changing context, we offer:

- A clear and courageous voice calling for a fairer and more humane asylum and protection system, at both Scottish and UK levels
- Responsive, consistent and inclusive support for refugees, whatever their legal status and situation
- Expert information, advice and training for policy makers, local authorities, community organisations and people seeking safety
- A collaborative approach, working closely with partner organisations, service providers and service users to ensure refugees receive the right support
- Decades of lived and learned experience which shapes our work and enables us to constructively hold policy makers and service providers to account
- National leadership to help groups and organisations across the country connect and collaborate with one another, build capacity and better represent their communities.

**As a refugee, you feel like you have to justify yourself all the time. When you get somewhere where you don't need to explain, people just know, it's quite a relief. You don't feel judged. You can just be yourself.**

**Nancy, Peer Integration Project Volunteer**



# Our context

**In these fast-changing and unpredictable times, it can be hard to make long-term plans. Our strategic objectives will be annually reviewed as the context changes. We have identified three key trends which are likely to influence the way we work over the next five years:**

**Economic uncertainty will affect people we support, our partners and our own plans.** Funding is likely to become more competitive, unpredictable and challenging to secure. Meanwhile, growing need and reduced budgets will increase pressure on already squeezed public services. This will have a knock-on effect on refugees, who are often among the poorest and most marginalised in our communities. At the same time, refugees can contribute much-needed skills, fill labour market gaps and enrich local communities.

**The political landscape is likely to be challenging.** Hostile environment policies pursued by the current UK government are already having a devastating impact on the people we serve. A UK general election will take place in the next five years and there may also be a second Scottish independence referendum. Whatever the results, differences are likely to remain between the approaches and policies of the UK and Scottish governments.

**How people seek safety in Scotland and where they go on to live is changing.** Over the next five years, people fleeing war, persecution and human rights abuses are likely to arrive via a growing number of different routes and schemes. Refugees are also arriving, settling and contributing to community life in a much wider geographical spread across the country. We need to adapt how and where we deliver services.

**Nobody likes to live outside their country without family. We all want to live a normal life, but it is not in my hands. We had to leave because it was not safe.**

Shani\*, Service user



# Achieving together

In these challenging times, we are proud of:

- The strength, resilience and dedication of our staff, volunteers and service users
- Our ability to quickly adapt to crises and continue delivering advice and support to refugees through our services
- Collaborating with communities across Scotland to build a national network of support for people seeking safety
- Implementing a New Scots strategy that welcomes and empowers people to become part of the community from the day they arrive
- Campaigning for refugee rights, winning refugee voting rights and increasing public awareness and support for people seeking safety
- Introducing new and better ways of working with partner organisations and service providers to improve the experience of people rebuilding their lives in Scotland.

Integration isn't just about finding someone a house to live in and a job to go to. It's about what people do at the weekend too. Being able to help someone feel like they belong and are part of society is very satisfying.

Dumie, Regional Integration Team Coordinator





# How we need to change

**To achieve our ambition, we have identified three things we need to change about how we work:**

**Nothing about refugees without refugees** — almost two thirds of our staff have experienced what it is to be a refugee. We will find systematic, creative and transparent ways to involve the people and communities we exist for and ensure this is central to everything we do.

**Strengthening our people's resilience and wellbeing** — we want our staff and volunteers to feel recognised, valued and appreciated. We will invest more in the welfare and personal development of our people and ensure they have the time, resources, training and support they need to thrive.

**Integrating and sharing knowledge and learning** — we will improve the way we evaluate and learn from our work. We will invest more time, skills and capacity to honestly reflect on the difference we are making and improve how we capture, package and share this knowledge.

**Before, I thought that because I am an asylum seeker, I don't have the right to speak up about my problems. Now I know that I have the right to speak about the things that are important to me.**

**A young person supported by our  
Scottish Guardianship Service**



# Our central ambition

The central ambition driving our work.

Looking at the context we will be working in over the next 5 years, our strengths and our mission as an organisation, we have formed one clear transformative ambition from which all our priorities and objectives will grow.

By 2028, we want Scotland to be the best place for refugees to thrive, challenge injustice, achieve their ambitions and empower their communities, no matter where they have come from or how they arrived.

When you hear the words ‘what can I do to help?’ it’s so good. It feels like a door has opened and good things can start to happen.

Emine\*, Service user

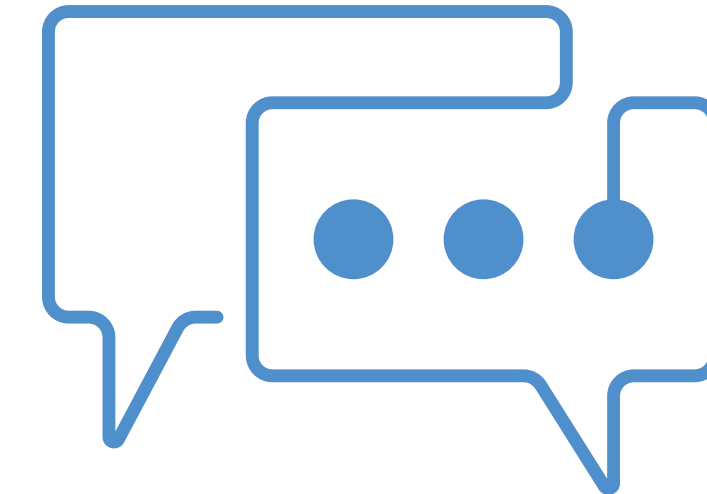
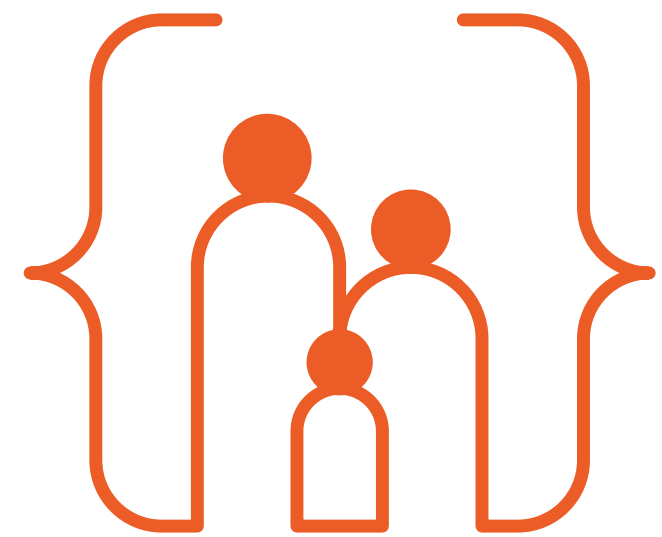
So many things go into creating a life that you don’t necessarily think about until you’ve had to leave your home and start again somewhere new.

Ruby, Regional Integration Coordinator

# Our strategic priorities 2023—28

**Refugees**  
receive consistent  
quality support

**Public opinion**  
supports and  
welcomes refugees



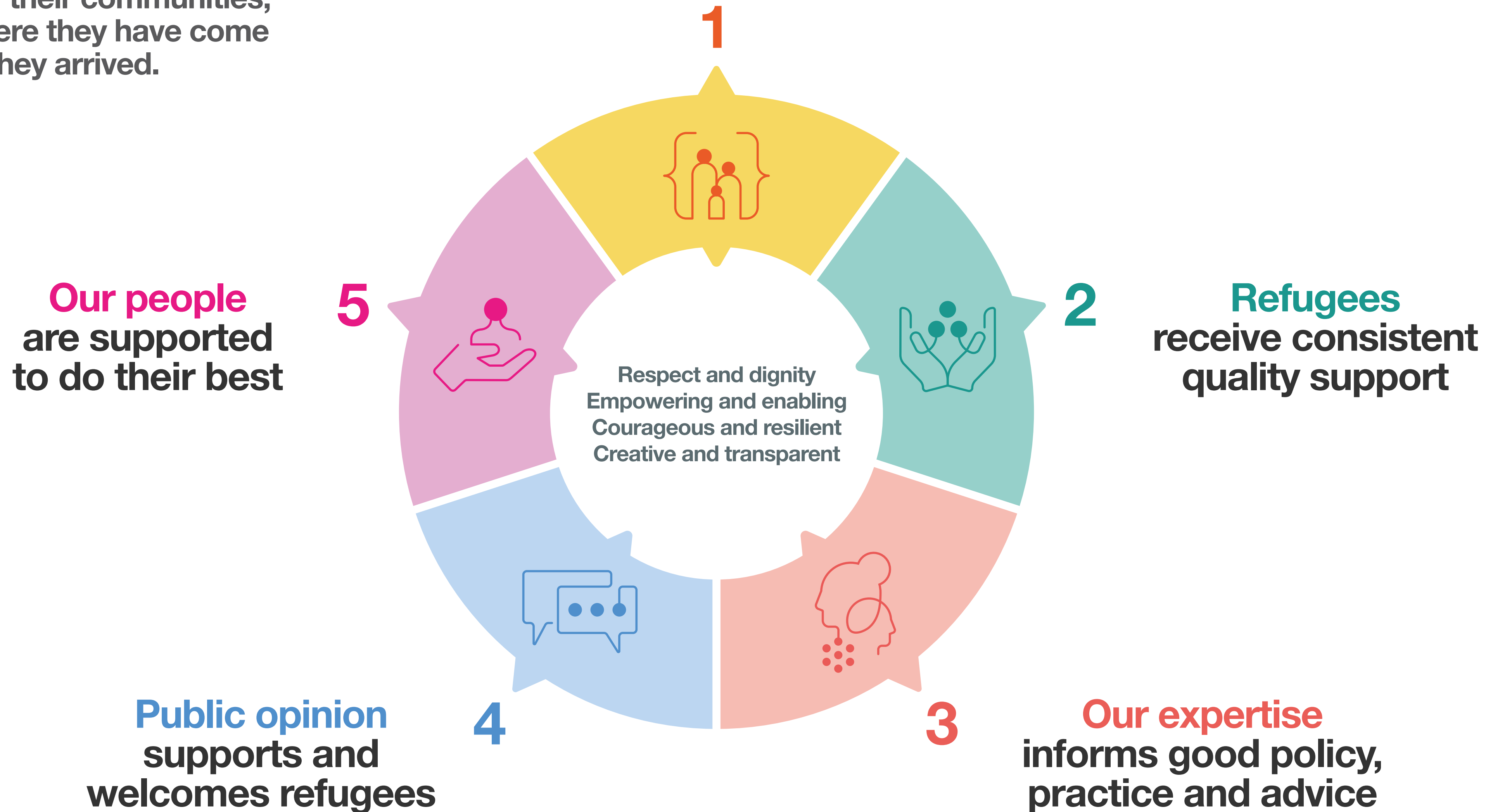
**Nothing**  
**about refugees**  
without refugees

**Our expertise**  
informs good policy,  
practice and advice

**Our people**  
are supported  
to do their best

Making Scotland the best place for refugees to thrive, challenge injustice, achieve their ambitions and empower their communities, no matter where they have come from or how they arrived.

## Nothing about refugees without refugees



# Nothing about refugees without refugees



## The challenge...

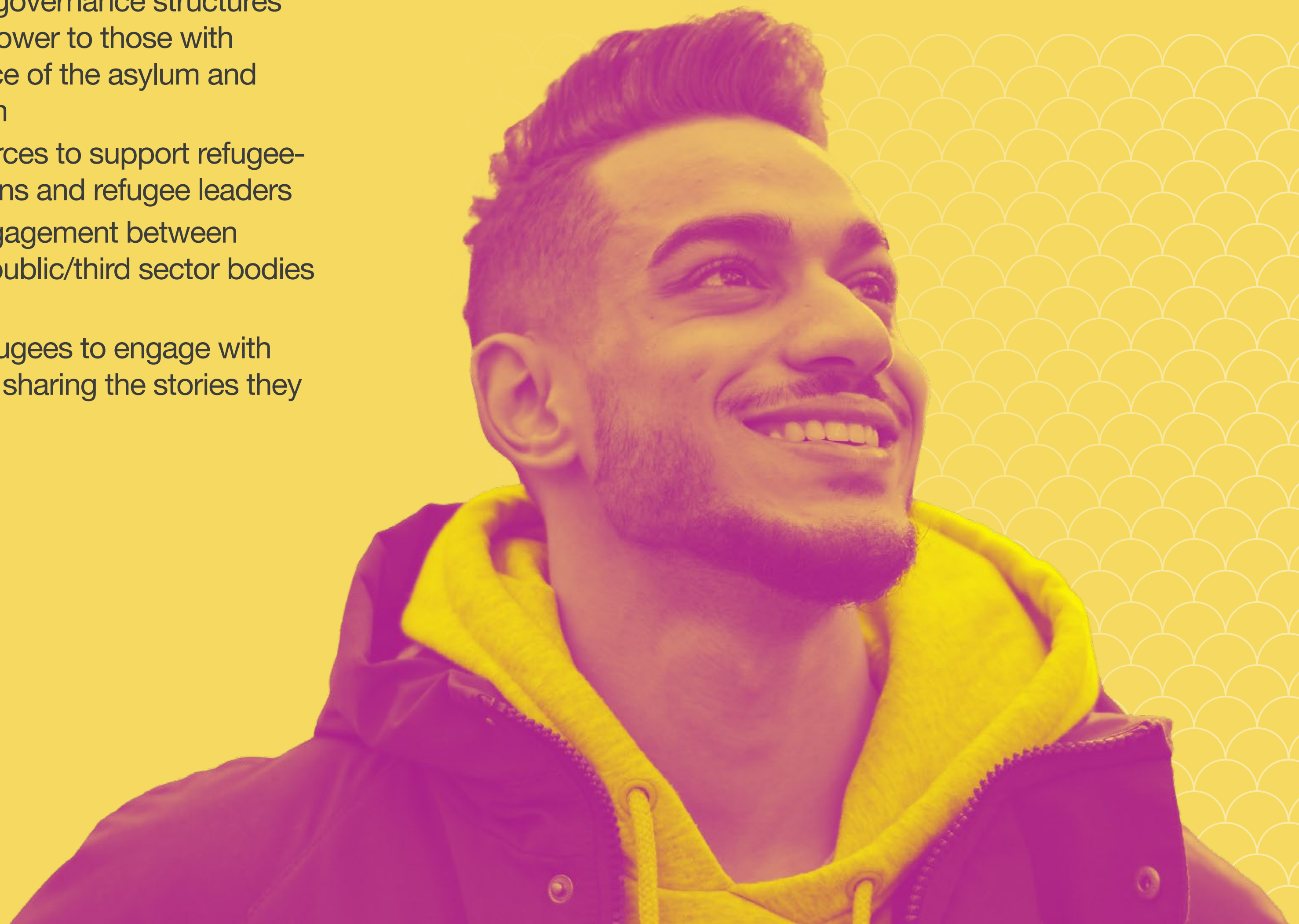
Refugees have unique experiences which are not currently heard by decision makers, and their skills and talents are not properly recognised. At UK level they are actively marginalised. We have an important role to play in challenging this, and we need to start by improving and challenging ourselves.

## Outcomes by 2028

1. Refugees feel and see that their voices are embraced and amplified by Scottish Refugee Council
2. Refugees feel confident and empowered to speak out on what matters to them
3. Our work and strategic choices are tested and informed by refugees' views
4. Scottish media, public sector and voluntary bodies increasingly wish to and can hear the views of refugees

## We will do this by

- Asking refugees what action is needed and what our priorities should be
- Taking strategic opportunities to speak out to safeguard refugees' rights and challenge injustices
- Changing our governance structures to give more power to those with lived experience of the asylum and refugee system
- Seeking resources to support refugee-led organisations and refugee leaders
- Facilitating engagement between refugees and public/third sector bodies in Scotland
- Supporting refugees to engage with the media and sharing the stories they want to tell



# Refugees receive consistent quality support



## The challenge...

Government support for refugees is increasingly disjointed, inconsistent and sometimes unjust, with different protection schemes for different nationalities offering differing access to rights. We can do more to encourage public bodies and third sector organisations across Scotland to offer equity of service and common quality standards of support.

## Outcomes by 2028

1. Refugees across Scotland are able to exercise their rights and access support through the services we deliver
2. Public bodies and third sector organisations across Scotland deliver equitable support to refugees, meeting the quality standards we uphold
3. Refugees have improved access to employment opportunities and support
4. Public bodies and third sector organisations across Scotland have the information and advice they need to support refugees

## We will do this by

- Providing advice, advocacy and information for refugees on their rights, offering one-to-one support and co-production of holistic integration plans
- Working with Scottish local authorities and third sector organisations to encourage consistent support meeting our agreed standards or delivering contracted local services in line with these standards
- Delivering our valued national services for refugees including our helpline, integration, guardianship and destitution services
- Developing a cross-cutting service, policy and partnerships agenda to improve refugees' access to employment and the right to work
- Producing accessible information resources for service providers and refugee communities





**Our expertise**  
**informs good policy,**  
**practice and advice**



## The challenge...

Legislation, policy and services are often developed in response to crisis (real or perceived). There is not enough learning from previous experience, dissemination of evidence or involvement of refugees. We need to help lead a step-change in evidence-and-experience-informed policy and service development, grounded in a respect for human rights. We need to be an outspoken advocate for refugee rights, challenging institutional racism and structural discrimination. We will focus primarily on improvements in Scotland, where we can have most influence, whilst amplifying our voice at a UK level through strong partnerships. We must begin by understanding and resourcing our own role as a learning organisation.

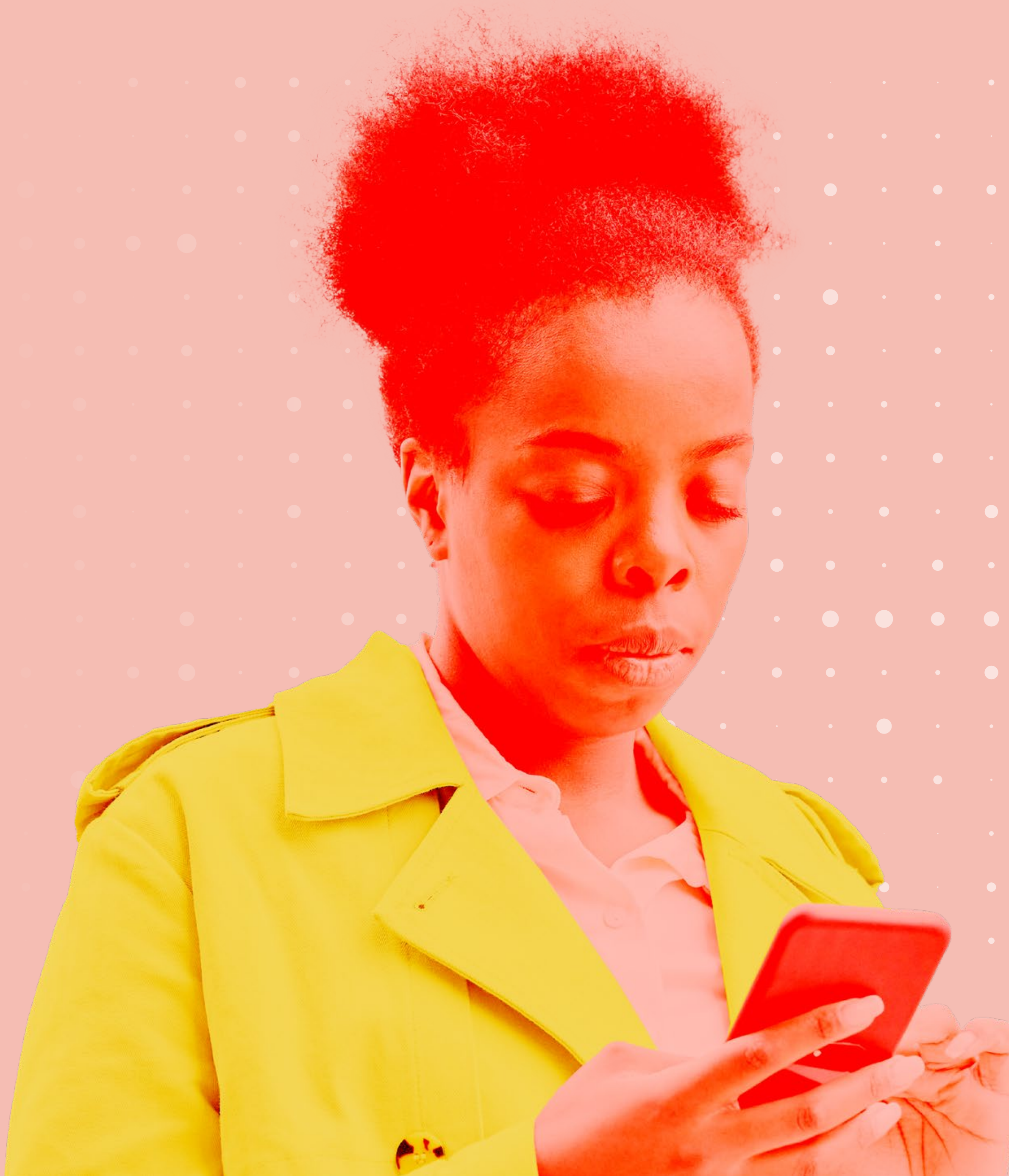
## Outcomes by 2028

1. Integration policy and practice is ambitious, equitable and consistent across Scotland
2. The UK asylum and protection system is reformed to be fairer, anti-racist and more effective
3. Refugee policy and practice is informed by refugees' experience and by our shared learning
4. Innovative approaches to address refugees' differing access to rights are piloted and tested
5. We strengthen our identity as a learning organisation, working across teams to build the evidence base and show the impact of our work



## We will do this by

- Defining and resourcing what it means for us to be an evidence based, digitally-enabled, impact-driven learning organisation
- Leading policy development and advocacy to continually improve refugee integration in Scotland using all means possible including legal challenge if required
- Policy development and advocacy in partnership with others to build a fairer and kinder asylum and protection system at UK level
- Developing quality standards for service providers and community organisations working to support refugees in Scotland
- Identifying how to best meet the specific needs of particular groups, for example children, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people and others
- Using our expertise to build partnerships which promote and learn from best practice



# Public opinion supports and welcomes refugees



## The challenge...

Many Scottish communities have welcomed refugees and are enriched by them, but racism and discrimination are still a daily experience for many. Negative public discourse, xenophobia and regressive UK government policy must be challenged. Resources must flow into communities welcoming refugees and not into the profits of private companies. Communities need more opportunities to learn from real refugee experiences, meet and support each other, and take grassroots action to make Scotland more welcoming.

## Outcomes by 2028

1. Public support for refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland is increased and racism and discrimination is reduced
2. Refugees feel safe, welcome and part of the community in Scotland
3. Community groups supporting refugees are able to thrive
4. Communities are resourced, empowered, informed and mobilised to welcome refugees and challenge injustice

## We will do this by

- Engaging with the Scottish public to challenge racism, grow understanding and promote positive attitudes towards people seeking safety
- Building capacity in local communities across Scotland and leveraging resources to improve representation, inclusion, support and services for refugees
- Encouraging accurate reporting of refugee issues in the media, challenging prejudice and normalising refugee experiences
- Giving people across Scotland more opportunities to support us by donating, volunteering and campaigning
- Continuing to expand and develop Refugee Festival Scotland into a truly national celebration of arts and culture



**Our people**  
**are supported**  
**to do their best**



## The challenge...

People are at the heart of everything we do, and our staff and volunteers achieve amazing results for refugees, but they can feel overwhelmed and disheartened by the scale of the task and limited resources. We need to do more to support staff wellbeing, develop and retain people, to invest in internal improvements, to learn and to challenge ourselves to be the best we can be.

## Outcomes by 2028

1. Our people feel supported to do their best
2. We are an anti-racist and non-discriminatory organisation
3. Our organisation has (and can use) the right technology, systems and tools to deliver our aims
4. We are financially sustainable and resourced to deliver our ambition
5. We meet good practice standards in governance and regulatory compliance

## We will do this by

- Developing and implementing a prioritised plan to attract, develop, retain and inspire colleagues to fulfil their potential, build wellbeing and strengthen the organisational culture
- Creating internal structures to help us become a demonstrably anti-racist and non-discriminatory organisation
- Creating and implementing the internal processes we need to support our volunteers, ensure we have the technology and training we need, comply with regulations, strengthen governance, manage our finances and improve our planning



**I can't describe how I felt when I heard we had refugee status. I took my kids and give them a big hug. I was worrying that we would be sent away. Now I felt safe. My kids won't see bad things. In my country I can't feel safe. Here, I can protect them.**

**The first thing I would tell to someone who is new to Scotland is come to Scottish Refugee Council and someone will help you. When I came here, they helped me. No one has helped me like here.**

**Shani\*, Service user**





Scottish Refugee Council is Scotland's national refugee charity. We provide direct support and advice, promote community integration, stand up for refugee rights and campaign for a fairer, more humane asylum system.

Together, we can build a better future with refugees in Scotland.

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)

**Scottish Refugee Council**

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Glasgow G2 5AH

**Tel: 0141 248 9799**

Scottish Charity Number: SC008639  
Company Number: SC145067  
OISC reference number: N200100084

