



Image by Jenny Wicks

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Navigating the asylum system

Evaluation of Scottish Refugee Council's
Family Rights Service

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Glossary

Case Managers in the FRS play a crucial role in supporting asylum-seeking families with children. They provide comprehensive assistance to help families navigate the complex asylum process and access essential services.

The Guardianship Scotland is a program designed to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking and trafficked children in Scotland. It provides children with an Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG) that helps them navigate the complex asylum process and access necessary services. The program aims to ensure that children who arrive in Scotland without parents or guardians receive the care, support, and advocacy they need to integrate into society and secure their rights. A guardian accompanies children and young people when they claim asylum or are referred to the National Referral Mechanism and are cared for by health, education, and welfare services. A guardian will help a child or young person to be actively involved in decisions that affect their life and to get the help they need when they need it. A guardian is on the child's side, can explain what is happening to them, will listen to their views and experiences, and speak up for them when needed. A guardian will also help a child or young person to plan their future, whether in the UK or elsewhere.

MEARS Group is a UK-based company that provides housing and support services for asylum seekers and refugees. They are contracted by the government to manage and maintain accommodation for individuals awaiting the outcome of their asylum claims. MEARS aims to ensure that asylum seekers can access safe, habitable, and fit-for-purpose housing. They also provide support services to help individuals integrate into their new communities.

Health Visitors in Scotland are registered nurses or midwives who have undertaken additional training to specialise in community health. They play a vital role in supporting families with young children, from pregnancy through to school entry. Health visitors provide a proactive and universal service, focusing on the health and well-being of children and their families.

Migrant Help is a UK-based charity that provides independent advice and support to people seeking asylum, refugees, and victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. This includes helping individuals apply for asylum support, dealing with issues related to asylum housing, and assisting those who have received refugee status to move on from asylum housing. Migrant Help operates a 24/7 helpline to offer immediate assistance and guidance. They also work to bridge community gaps and bring together various services to support those in need.

National Referring Mechanism is a UK framework for identifying and referring potential victims of human trafficking and modern slavery and ensuring they receive appropriate support. Referrals can only be made by authorised agencies known as First Responders.

Latta & Co is a legal firm based in Glasgow, Scotland. They offer a wide range of legal services, with a particular focus on immigration law. Their team includes specialists accredited by the Law Society of Scotland, making them one of the largest and most experienced immigration practices in the country. They facilitate a supervisory role for case managers in the FRS.

JustRight Scotland is a charity founded by human rights lawyers. They use the law to defend and extend people's rights by providing direct legal advice to those who struggle to access justice. Their work focuses on reducing discrimination and disadvantage, aiming for a fairer and more equal Scotland. They also facilitate a supervisory role for case managers in the FRS.

[The Illegal Migrant Act 2023](#) is a UK law aimed at reducing illegal immigration. It mandates the removal of individuals who enter the UK illegally, either to their home country or a safe third country. The Act seeks to deter dangerous and unlawful migration routes, such as small boat crossings, and to ensure that the UK can better support those in genuine need of asylum through safe and legal pathways.

More information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-migration-bill>

[The Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) is a UK law that introduces significant changes to the country's immigration, asylum, and nationality systems. It aims to make the system fairer and more 'effective', deter illegal entry, and remove individuals with no right to remain in the UK.

More information: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/36/contents>

Initial Assessments carried out by case managers in the FRS are comprehensive and aim to identify the needs of asylum-seeking families. These assessments ensure that families are not at immediate risk of destitution or homelessness, address any immediate health needs, and identify legal requirements to help families understand the asylum process and their rights. Additionally, case managers assess social support needs, such as education, welfare support, and community integration, while also identifying any safeguarding concerns, particularly related to children or vulnerable adults. This thorough assessment process helps create a tailored support plan for each family, ensuring they receive the necessary assistance to rebuild their lives in Scotland.

During **Substantive Interviews**, a Home Office interviewer will ask detailed questions about a person's reasons for seeking asylum in the UK. This can be a lengthy and challenging process, often lasting several hours, where they may be asked the same questions in different ways to ensure consistency and clarity. The purpose of the substantive interview is to gather comprehensive information about an individual's situation, including the dangers they face in their home country, their journey to the UK, and any other relevant details. This information is critical for the Home Office to make an informed decision on your asylum application.

An **asylum claim** is a formal request made by an individual seeking protection in a foreign country due to fear of persecution in their home country. This persecution may be based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

[The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2024](#) is a comprehensive plan developed by the Scottish Government, COSLA, and the Scottish Refugee Council to support the integration of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forced migrants into Scottish communities. The strategy aims to create a fair and equal Scotland where the rights of all individuals are respected and protected. It empowers refugees and asylum seekers to reach their full potential and contribute to their new communities. More information:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2024/>

Evaluation Team

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Dr Diarmuid McDonnell is a Reader in Social Statistics at the University of the West of Scotland and Director of Braw Data Ltd. His research examines a number of interrelated topics concerning the nonprofit/charity sector: funding sources and networks; measuring and modelling organisational and financial risk; evaluating regulatory interventions; and estimating the geographical distribution of charitable activity.

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Introduction

This report is the culmination of data collected through the evaluation of the Family Rights Service, which began in January 2022 with our evaluation work beginning in August of that year. Data collection ended in June 2024.

Section one outlines the challenges that those seeking asylum in the UK face both in navigating the system as well as everyday life in the UK. When they enter, they do so with lived experiences of persecution and trauma. This section discusses the complexities of the system and the pressures that those seeking asylum face when they enter the UK.

Section two provides a brief overview of what the Family Rights Service is and its main objectives. It introduces the case management approach that the Scottish Refugee Council and partners have adopted in order to address some of the issues presented in section one. It also provides an indication of those families within the service.

Section three outlines the changing landscape of the asylum system over the short time in which the Family Rights Service, and our evaluation, have existed. This includes a description of legal changes as well as more recent events. This ever-changing context evidences the need for support for families and other people seeking asylum in the UK. It became clear during the evaluation that professionals supporting those in the asylum system have also struggled with the constant changes.

Section four outlines the aims of the evaluation and our methodology. We employed a mixed-methods design that incorporates insights from three years' worth of client data made available from the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC), interviews and focus groups with case managers, organisational key partners and legal representatives, and primary survey data. In addition, we gathered the voices of families through focus group interviews and the use of WhatsApp diaries.

Section five provides a discussion of the key themes that were found across the data gathered during the evaluation. It is separated into two parts with the first exploring the findings from an analysis of the client data, and the second discussing the themes that were discovered across the qualitative data.

Section six outlines the key overarching achievements of the Family Rights Service and follows with recommendations that are focused on the sustainability of the service and future opportunities for rolling out the service to all individuals seeking asylum in Scotland, not only families.

SECTION ONE: Navigating the asylum system

“When you first arrive in the country, they interview every person to know about their background and everything. So, they knew that we are professionals and I had university certificates, but still, they are dealing with you like you are nothing. Just like you are nothing, but no, we are...”

...We are Kurdish people; we had a long and tough life. Our history started before Jesus Christ 2000 years ago. Since our arrival here, we feel that we are nothing.” (Family Focus Group 1)

While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 14) states that everyone has the right to claim asylum, being able to access or mobilise that right is fraught with challenges. Maintaining a sense of personhood within the asylum process is an even greater challenge (Mavin, 2019). Individual adults or families that seek asylum in the UK must navigate their way through a complex bureaucratic and legal system that lacks transparency, involves engagements with numerous organisations, form-filling and interviews, restrictions, and requirements, all while trying to manage day-to-day life. Alongside other issues such as racism, poverty, and language barriers, the UK asylum system can be considered as another source of vulnerability (Isaacs et. al., 2022). This section highlights some of the specific challenges for asylum seekers as they navigate both legal and support services in Scotland.

Asylum Support

The asylum system falls under the jurisdiction of the UK Parliament, including the provision of asylum accommodation, financial support, and advice, and while Scotland has no control over this process, the Scottish Parliament has devolved authority over areas such as health, education, housing, legal aid, and children’s services, all of which are crucial for welfare, well-being, and integration of newly arrived families in Scotland. Although many services are managed by Local Authorities through the statutory role of social work concerning this population, there are numerous third-sector support services in place that work to address social, economic, and welfare needs. Private contractors also work within this system such as Mears, contracted to provide asylum accommodation in Scotland. Within this system of support, there are contractual agreements governing the relationship and providing Statements of Requirements. The Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC) governs the relationship between the Home Office and Mears, and the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE) governs the relationship between the Home Office and Migrant Help, who are funded to provide advice. These two contracts, together, were designed as a framework for supporting people seeking asylum.

Local authority responsibility to children in their local areas is primarily governed by the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 with its responsibility to assess children in need and provide services and support when needed. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995, section 22, requires local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need; section 25 of the Act also allows local authorities to provide accommodation for those children who are in the area and have nobody with parental responsibility for them; section 29 details the local authority duty to advise, guide and assist those children beyond the age of 16 who require such support. The provision of support under Scottish children's legislation is not contingent on nationality and/or immigration status, although the Home Office does provide additional funding contributing to the costs incurred by local authorities in looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. If children are part of a family group seeking asylum, any support for the family, or children specifically, would be assessed by local authorities as part of their wider duties.

The challenges of navigating the asylum system and support services and the adverse effects it has on individuals are well documented (Berg et al., 2023; Jannessari et al., 2022; Schuster, 2020). Families though, lie at 'the intersection between asylum, family, and human rights law' (Stevens 2010: 5). The 'family' in the asylum process is secondary to the issue of asylum, yet the issue of family is often placed first in relation to support systems. For example, when *individuals'* asylum applications are refused, they are usually required to leave UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) accommodation within 21 days of receiving the decision. In addition, they are no longer considered an 'asylum seeker' for support purposes, although may still be able to obtain section 4 accommodation and subsistence if they are destitute and meet eligibility criteria.

If an asylum seeker household, that has had their asylum claim refused, includes a dependent child who is under 18, their support and accommodation are not withdrawn. The local authority continues to treat the family as asylum seekers while the child is under 18 and remains in the UK, due to the local authority's powers and duties under section 17 of the Children Act (1989).

While individuals who enter the legal system as individuals face challenges, such challenges are often multiplied and more complex when there is a family unit due to the multiple and differing needs of each family member. Although for families the main applicant is the focus of the legal process, families are navigating the needs of each member of the family unit and often require a greater number of support services. This can often produce increased vulnerabilities, for example in relation to welfare outcomes such as poverty, social inclusion, and mental health for both adults and children. While lived experiences of forced migration both in the country of origin and on the journey to the UK are traumatic, this trauma extends through - and is often exacerbated - by the asylum process (Yeo, 2022), the impact of which extends from individuals to families.

Poverty

Navigating the asylum and support systems occurs at the same time as coming to terms with being in a new country, culture, and for many, speaking a new language. Forced migration journeys are filled with trauma, poverty, violence, indeterminate periods of waiting, and uncertainty (Walsh and Ferazzoli, 2023). Daily life in Scotland is therefore constrained, and this is largely because of poverty, which is pervasive and policy-induced (Page, 2023). People seeking asylum are unable to work during the time that their application is being considered (Gov.uk 2024a), limiting their sense of self-worth, constraining their financial well-being, and impacting their integration into, and enjoyment of, Scottish society. The degree of poverty for those within the asylum system poses concerns (see Page, 2023 and Allsop et. al. 2014). Those seeking asylum must rely on the asylum support system with financial support rates set at £49.18 per week to cover essential living needs like food, travel, and communications - less than half of universal credit rates (Gov.uk 2024b). For those in full board accommodation, mostly hotels, the rate is £8.86 per week, reduced in January 2024 from £9.58. With multiple appointments to attend and daily life to adapt to, it is worth noting that a full-day bus ticket in Glasgow is £5.60, and the daily rate of asylum support is £7. Allsop et al. (2014) point out that reducing poverty would not only improve the quality and fairness of the asylum system, but would also improve refugee health, well-being, and integration.

Legal Representation

During the process of seeking asylum, there are organised meetings, such as screening and substantive interviews with the Home Office, documents that asylum seekers must complete, and places that they must register, such as GP Services and, where appropriate, schools. Amongst this though are a multitude of needs, both anticipated and unanticipated. One of the greatest and most pressing needs for those seeking asylum is legal representation. Gathering appropriate evidence for claiming asylum is complicated and therefore it is important that legal representatives and their clients build strong and trusting relationships with a good foundation of open and transparent communication. Finding legal aid solicitors outside of the central belt in Scotland is challenging, and with the Home Office increasing dispersal across the country, this is likely to raise further concerns. For those in the asylum process, their insecure immigration status is a significant barrier to enjoying good mental well-being and good mental health (Priebe et. al., 2016). Regular reporting to the Home Office and the ongoing legal processes involve recounting some of the most traumatic experiences of their lives. The process in its entirety is complicated, resource-intensive, and lengthy. This can be evidenced by the backlog that the Home Office is currently facing (Migration Observatory, 2024). As Farrell (2012: 12) emphasises, 'the role of legal practitioners becomes crucial in the construction of the account of persecution which forms a large part of the asylum claim'.

Lack of Consistent Guidance

Claiming asylum, as a process, has been described as ‘harmful’, ‘violent’, and ‘infantilizing’ (see Canning, 2020). There is no road map of support that new arrivals can use and although there are multiple voices for support and signposting in Scotland, there is little consistency in the lives of those seeking asylum and little overview of a person’s journey through the asylum process or as they navigate the support system. Evans (2020: 2) points out that ‘individuals integrating in Glasgow are positioned in a unique space between two, often oppositional, national narratives’ where there is ‘ongoing tension between Scotland’s welcome response and the everyday, and structural challenges faced by those labouring through processes’. This not only results in challenges for integration and impacts on mental health but there are often practical issues, too. Delays can occur when people do not understand the legal process or if it has been poorly communicated, and similarly, if they do not know from where or whom to seek support. All of this takes place within a context of increasing pressures and resource constraints on organisations and practitioners that provide support and legal assistance (Mayblin and James, 2019). With little oversight and numerous gaps in the asylum and support systems, asylum seekers’ access to their rights cannot be fully realised.

Marginalisation and Mental Health

People seeking asylum are marginalised politically, socially, and economically (Isaacs et al 2019). They experience social isolation, degradation, and dehumanisation (see Jannessari et al., 2022), and amidst growing levels of surveillance and securitisation there is increasing evidence indicating that the ‘hostile environment’ that the UK has developed, works to disenfranchise and disempower those entering the system (Wells et al., 2024; Benwell et al., 2023; Canning, 2019). Research has shown that the asylum system is generating or exacerbating stresses that place asylum seekers and refugees among the highest risk categories for suicide in the UK, as well as revealing high rates of self-harm amongst both adults and children (Allsopp et al, 2019). This is exacerbated through marginalisation. Maguire (2023) highlights the experiences of social exclusion that are generated through what they refer to as the ‘structural enforcement of loneliness’, a consequence of racism and xenophobia embedded in immigration strategy, and the very foundations and purpose of the ‘hostile environment’. This loneliness is greater when there is a lack of understanding and knowledge of the asylum system from which they seek protection. This is further compounded by the lack of trauma-informed health support services designed and equipped to deal with both adults and children with complex needs. At the time of writing, and with growing civil unrest as well as a cost-of-living crisis, the physical safety and mental well-being of those seeking asylum in the UK are of even greater concern (BBC, 2024).

SECTION TWO: The Family Rights Service

The Family Rights Service (FRS) began in January 2022 to work with 200 newly arrived asylum-seeking families. This included those arriving with children up to 18 years old as well as women who were pregnant. The project is run in partnership with Fraser Latta & Co and JustRight Scotland who have provided legal supervision and bespoke training on different topics identified and funded by the Scottish Refugee Council.

The aims of the Family Rights Service are

1. To improve the experience and understanding of the asylum system for the 200 participating families living in Scotland, increase access to justice, and reduce poverty.
2. To pilot an end-to-end asylum case management model, improve asylum advice sector collaboration, identify and resolve gaps in support, and create a model for a sustainable and resourced asylum advice system in Scotland and the UK.

Delivery of the FRS has been informed throughout the life of the pilot by two governance groups, who brought skills in asylum and refugee policy, working with communities, integration, service delivery both in the third sector and local authorities, and legal representatives working with asylum seekers, both adults and children.

On arrival to the UK, people seeking asylum enter a complicated and oppressive system requiring interactions with multiple organisations, extensive paperwork, interviews, and numerous restrictions and requirements (Mayblin and James, 2019; Canning, 2017). The FRS is driven by the desire to respond to issues within the asylum advice and legal advice systems to sufficiently meet the protection and welfare outcomes of people seeking asylum in Scotland.

Case Management Approach

Adopting a case-management model, the FRS assigns a Case Manager to each new family arriving in Scotland. This approach to working with families seeking asylum is coordinated and family-centered, aiming to provide holistic support from the moment they enter the country. As these families often have complex needs and face intersecting challenges involving various organisations and agencies, the Case Manager ensures more tailored and responsive interventions by facilitating faster connections between individuals, families, legal professionals, and necessary services. By implementing this case-management model, the FRS seeks to empower families throughout the asylum process, enhancing their understanding of and access to their rights and entitlements while supporting their integration into Scottish society.

Through the pilot of the Family Rights Service, the Scottish Refugee Council and partners aimed to achieve direct service delivery to 200 families to increase access to justice, reduce poverty, and address welfare issues by:

- Enhancing understanding of how the asylum processes work at key points
- Assisting families to address welfare issues including access to asylum support, housing, education, health, social connections, prevent destitution, and support them with parenting and family relationships
- Assisting families to explore their strengths, vulnerabilities, complex needs, and assist them to understand and deal with trauma
- Clarifying the role of case managers in asylum determination processes
- Clarifying the role of case managers and tasks in providing welfare support and evidencing structural drivers of poverty
- Clarifying the role and task of case managers in reducing complex trauma

Complexities of the asylum and support systems have already resulted in case management approaches being adopted, such as the successful and ongoing Guardianship Scotland which provides an Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG) to all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, victims of trafficking and children vulnerable to trafficking who arrive in Scotland. This service began in 2010 as the Scottish Guardianship Service, to facilitate navigating the trafficking, asylum, welfare, criminal justice, and age assessment processes and now provides an ICTG as a consistent and key point of contact for children and young people to support them and work collaboratively with other professionals to ensure the best interests of the child are at the centre of all decision-making.

Similarly, a case management approach was developed and piloted in 2020 by the King's Arms Project in partnership with the Home Office and UNHCR, titled 'Refugee and Migrant Advice Service'. This support service was established for people without immigration status as an Alternatives to Detention (ATD) pilot to provide participants with holistic support and access to free legal advice to help people understand their immigration options and make decisions about their next steps to maximise choices and engagement with the immigration system. Evaluation of this service highlighted that the length of support on the pilot was both more cost-effective than the average length of stay in detention and that the pilot increased participants' understanding of their immigration cases with resultant benefits in self-esteem and well-being (NatCen 2023).

At the time of writing, case management approaches have also been adopted for adult victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, such as the Victim Navigator Programme, an initiative by Justice and Care that provides a Victim Navigator to adults navigating police forces, border teams, and serious organised crime units to bridge the gap between law enforcement and victims of modern slavery. Victim Navigators also provide support and assistance depending on the needs of the victim-survivor, ranging from mental health and emotional support to signposting and providing

advocacy on accommodation, finances, and everyday needs. A similar approach has been adopted by Hope for Justice with an Independent Modern Slavery Advocate (IMSA) model development project to respond to gaps in advocacy for survivors.

Role of the Case Manager in the Family Rights Service

The Scottish Refugee Council provides guidance, signposting, advice, and support throughout the process (See Appendix A for job description). Some of this includes but is not limited to, determining whether or not a family has legal representation, and if not, supporting the family to find a lawyer; attending legal appointments with clients to provide support and clarification for the family; meeting with families before their substantive interviews to ensure that they are prepared and understand the process; attend Home Office meetings to provide emotional support; work with legal partners to support them in supporting their clients, for example by preparing for appointments and gathering the required evidence; providing practical and emotional support more generally for families throughout their asylum claim that includes signposting relevant services and organisations based on welfare needs, helping make appointments, and being a consistent and safe point of contact.

It is evident that case managers adopt a comprehensive, human rights-based, and trauma-informed approach to supporting new arrivals, honouring the UK's international obligations and Scotland's enduring commitment to decency, humanity, and fairness. Having undergone a series of trauma-informed training courses, amongst others, case managers are well-placed to recognise and respond to the psychological impacts of displacement and asylum-seeking experiences. The support they provide is tailored and needs-driven to address the challenges faced by individuals and families. The FRS has therefore created a safe and supportive environment where individuals feel understood and respected, which is crucial for their recovery and integration. Altogether, the case management model ensures that there is a level of consistency and safety in the asylum system that has not yet existed for new arrivals to Scotland/UK.

As the case management approach provides a level of oversight for each family in the asylum system, in a way that has not yet been done in the UK, case managers are in contact with several services across Scotland. The FRS therefore promotes multi-organisation collaboration, to improve communication across the entire system.

To oversee the case management pilot, the SRC has two core groups. The first is the Partnership Operational Group (membership can be found in Appendix B) who monitor the operational activity, share learning, identify issues and gaps, and who have informed the project's evaluation. To ensure policy, system, and practice change can be achieved during and after the pilot, the SRC also appointed a Strategic Advisory Group (membership in Appendix B). Meetings for both of these groups provide important and dedicated spaces for multi-agency collaboration, information sharing,

and the identification and monitoring of gaps within the asylum system. By working together, they have identified gaps in the asylum determination process, health and well-being support and provision, education and administration of local authority grants, digital inclusion issues, poverty, challenges around opportunities for establishing social connections, and the provision of adequate accommodation.

Who is part of the service?

In the most recent client data snapshot (June 2024), 207 main applicants are participating in the Family Rights Service, and all have children in the UK and/or are pregnant:

- 66% of main applicants have a spouse or partner.
- 90% already have family in the UK.
- 84% have children with them in the UK; there were 335 children in total, with the typical main applicant having two children with them.
- Including children, spouses, and partners, the Family Rights Service supported 676 individuals.

Using information on the main applicants, 34% are from Iraq, 11% from Syria, and 10% from Iran – the remainder are from a broad set of countries including Nigeria, Pakistan, and Libya. 35% of main applicants speak Kurdish (Sorani) as their preferred language, 22% English, and 16% Arabic – the remaining languages including Farsi, Spanish, and Lebanese. 84% of main applicants have at least one child with them in the UK, and 60% are female. Overwhelmingly applicants refer themselves to the Family Rights Service (77%), though a small proportion are referred from the British Red Cross, Govan Community Project, and other organisations. The typical age of a main applicant is 33 and the average length of time as a client of the Family Rights Service is 373 days.

SECTION THREE: Changing Landscape of the Asylum System

Since the Family Rights Service began in January 2022 there have been some important changes made to the asylum process in the UK.

The Nationality and Borders Bill was introduced to Parliament in July 2021 and became an Act of law in April 2022. A key aspect of this Act was the introduction of a two-tier system meaning that refugees have different rights based on how they entered the UK. This differential treatment of refugees is centered on their route to the UK with those who travel to the UK through third countries by irregular routes such as crossing the Channel, being given a new form of temporary protection with limited rights to welfare benefits and family reunion (see Refugee Council, 2023, for more on the differential treatment clause). These new rules apply to those who claimed asylum on or after the 28th of June 2022 with those who arrived before this date becoming part of what the Home Office refers to as 'legacy cases' (Gov.uk 2024c). It is important to note the Nationality and Borders Act gives the Home Secretary greater powers to declare an asylum claim inadmissible if a claimant was previously in or had connections with a safe third country. Restriction of what is an existing safe route to the UK, alongside limiting refugee family reunions, amongst other harms, highlights the growing desire for the UK government to further its hostile environment.

In April 2022, the UK also announced the UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership which aimed to send those who seek asylum in the UK to Rwanda to have their claims decided through the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill (see Walsh, 2024). As McKee (2024: 1) points out, 'the bill was deemed necessary because the government's previous attempts to send migrants to Rwanda were thwarted, firstly by a series of temporary blocks (Rule 39 orders) imposed by the European Court of Human Rights, and then by the UK Supreme Court'. This policy has since been cancelled by the current Labour government on 17 July 2023.

In February 2023, a little over a year after the Family Rights Service began, and six months after the start of our evaluation, the Home Office introduced the Streamlines Asylum Process (SAP) with the use of questionnaires for those who arrived before the 28th of June 2022 from 5 particular countries (Afghanistan, Eritrea, Libya, Syria, and Yemen). Aimed primarily at clearing the historic backlog of applications, these questionnaires were designed with the intention that those who complete the questionnaire could avoid having to attend a substantive interview. In May 2023, this policy was expanded to include Iraqi and Iranian adults and, to further complicate the situation, in June 2023 the policy was further expanded to include claims not only made before the June 2022 date but after and up to the 7th March 2023. During those two dates, those claiming asylum from Sudan were also required to complete the questionnaire. The FRS and Case Managers were able to support families during this

period by ensuring that people were connected to and in contact with their lawyers in order to complete the questionnaire. Case Managers also facilitated claimants in understanding the importance of the questionnaire to ensure they did not miss the deadline for responding.

In March 2023, the UK Government then introduced the Illegal Migration Bill which became an Act of law on 20 July 2023. It has been argued that this new legislation is a move that 'seeks to abdicate the UK's moral and legal obligations to uphold the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which the UK was a founding signatory' (Roddick, 2024). This Act placed a legal duty on the Home Secretary to remove anyone arriving irregularly in the UK. The intention was to ensure those who arrive via an irregular route, such as a channel crossing, would have their asylum claim deemed 'inadmissible'. Further, they may be detained indefinitely and either removed to their own country or a 'safe third country' where the former is not possible, a power that the Act bestowed on the Home Secretary. This duty to remove did not apply to unaccompanied children although the Home Secretary would be required to remove them when they turn 18 years of age (Section 4). While this meant that asylum claims would be processed differently after 20 July 2023, a legal anomaly between different Acts of parliament resulted in a ban on processing asylum claims, leaving those who arrived in the UK from March 2023 onwards, and people who claimed asylum from mid-July 2023 onwards, in what Right to Remain (2024) calls 'immigration limbo'.

Regulations to amend the provisions of the Illegal Migrant Act were published on 24 July 2024. Regulations are a form of secondary legislation that provides instructions on how a law should be enforced in practice. These have resulted in the ban on the processing of asylum applications for those who arrived after 7 March 2023 being lifted. Claims made since this date will now be treated under the provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022. Claims can now be progressed through the standard asylum process, although the Home Office still faces a lengthy backlog. The section of the Illegal Migrant Act that places a duty to remove has still not come into force and it is not known when it will. Until it does, it cannot be applied.

What this quick-changing legal landscape reveals is that there have been ever-increasing restrictions placed on access to human rights. It has been clear throughout our evaluation that much confusion, anxiety, and fear exist about the social, economic, and practical implications of recent legal developments on the experience of the asylum system in the UK, people's access to their rights, and the delivery of support for new arrivals.

Specific to Scotland and mentioned earlier is the introduction of the updated New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy in March 2024 designed by the Scottish Refugee Council alongside the Scottish Government and COSLA. Together with the Delivery Plan for the Strategy published on 5 July 2024, there is a clear continuation of a bottom-up and top-down partnership approach, a commitment to inclusivity, multi-

agency collaboration, support from the day of arrival for 'New Scots', emphasis on rights and empowerment, awareness of trauma, and enhancing community, well-being and belonging. The Family Rights Service fits within the remit of the Strategy and both meets the actions and outcomes outlined in the Delivery Plan.

It is also important that we note recent civil unrest at the time of writing during the summer of 2024, with anti-immigration protests occurring across the UK, largely in England and Northern Ireland. Growing and overt hostility, and physical and verbal violence, have been directed at asylum seekers and refugees, including the accommodations provided for them, which are often contingency accommodations. It cannot be denied that this is facilitated by the construction of those seeking refuge as risky, clandestine, and/or criminal (see Rigby et al., 2021 and Bhatia, 2020). Misinformation becomes entangled with colonial legacies and dominant discourses of anti-immigrant and racist sentiments, which leave space for growing racism and violence, both individual and institutional. This has exacerbated - and is a result of - the increase since COVID-19 of contingency housing in the form of hotels in and outside of Glasgow to provide temporary accommodation for people who were already in the asylum system. It was thought that the use of such accommodation would only be during the pandemic but, despite concerns raised (see Gilmour et al, 2022), the contingency model was extended for all people newly arrived in the UK.

Families arriving in the UK can be dispersed anywhere in the UK and this usually involves the provision of temporary accommodation, often in hostels or hotels. Although in such accommodation families should be supplied with food and some finances for essentials, under the 1999 Immigration Act families who are applying for asylum may have no recourse to public funds and be denied access to some benefits and services. In Scotland, social care - as delivered by the local authority - is not a public fund for immigration purposes but may be provided to parents or children in need. COSLA (2023) has produced guidance for local authorities to support individuals and families with no recourse to public funds.

The legal changes and unrest over the last two and a half years and the confusion, dysregulation, and turmoil that they have caused for both people seeking asylum and those who support them, can be described as further forms of structural violence and social harm (Canning, 2019).

SECTION FOUR: Our Evaluation Process

Evaluation of the Family Rights Service officially began in August 2022 with data collection beginning in October 2022, following ethical clearance. This section outlines the aims of the evaluation and the methods of data collection and analysis used. Further reflections on data collection can be found in Appendix C.

Evaluation Aims

The evaluations sought to examine the following:

1. The use of a case manager approach to working with families seeking asylum.
2. The experiences of case managers, families, legal representatives, and other related organisations of the Family Rights Service
3. The role that case managers play in facilitating a smoother and more effective asylum system
4. The value of case managers for families seeking asylum
5. Opportunities and challenges presented by the current case manager approach to make recommendations for the improvement of the service.

Methods

Research methods were agreed with the Scottish Refugee Council and the research team took a reflexive approach to gathering data based on challenges and opportunities presented during data collection.

Focus Groups and Semi-Structured Interviews

Nine online and in-person focus groups and two online semi-structured interviews were conducted with case managers, legal representatives, key partners, and families. Aside from families and case managers, whose focus groups were in-person, online focus groups proved most accessible for other participants.

The focus groups provided space for participants to consider and reflect on their experiences in conversation with others who shared a similar position. This produced what can be termed as 'negotiated accounts' (Tonkiss, 2012) of the FRS from different perspectives, meaning that their understanding and perspectives were often formed during the process of the interview as they reflected on their experiences. While case managers were an already-formed participant group, key partners and legal representatives were invited by first using the list of contacts provided by the Scottish Refugee Council from their organisational group. Uptake was challenging (see Appendix C). Follow-up emails from the research team and some prompts from case managers facilitated the process of eventual recruitment.

Across the focus groups and interviews, the research team raised points mentioned by other participant groups to check interpretations or understandings, whilst being mindful of anonymity and confidentiality. This added an element of ‘member checking’ (Creswell & Miller, 2000), as well as raising new points of discussion.

Focus group and interview data was stored on the University of Stirling’s secure OneDrive server and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012) to explore answers to our central aims and to also identify other issues that were raised during discussions with participants.

WhatsApp Solicited Diaries

WhatsApp was used to gather ‘solicited diaries’ from families seeking asylum. While initially proposed as physical diaries, in discussion with Case Managers in our initial meeting, we changed the format to WhatsApp diaries to reflect the families’ most common and accessible means of interaction. A total of 6 families were included but one family ceased to respond early in the process.

Translated video recordings of the primary investigator were first sent to families through WhatsApp explaining the evaluation of the FRS, who we were, and what we were asking from participants. Although an information sheet and consent form were sent as translated documents, these were also summarised in the video. Families were left free to respond and initiate a conversation or not.

Although ongoing conversations were often prompted using questions such as “How are you and your family?”, “How is everything?” or, “What has been happening since we last chatted?”, the rest of the conversation or times when participants sent messages were left unprompted.

As an interactive and participatory method, we were able to gather both structured and unstructured insights into lived experiences (Filep et al., 2015). WhatsApp contact with families provided space for them to reflect on their experiences of the FRS and their asylum journey in a way that allowed both immediate and delayed contact. Research that draws on diaries to understand lived experience often provides a greater understanding of everyday life and emotions because the participants are not constrained by time or place, as with scheduled interviews or focus groups (Bondi et al., 2005; McGregor, 2006; Thomas, 2007).

Using this method allowed families to discuss their experiences with the case managers and legal representatives, reflect on the asylum system more broadly, and highlight other issues such as mental health, and adjusting to Scottish culture and society.

As data from WhatsApp is in text form, this allowed for translations using online services and allowed the researcher to check translations or meanings with the participants in real time. This method provided insightful data that families may have been less willing to share in face-to-face contact (see Linn, 2020 on work with refugee women). Similar to the analysis of focus group and interview data, translated messages were stored on our secure server with the original texts being deleted each week. The research team conducted a thematic analysis of the solicited diaries according to the research aims.

Online surveys

Four online surveys per category of stakeholder (case managers, legal representatives, and other key partners) throughout the evaluation were proposed to allow the team to measure and track the extent to which asylum seekers' understanding and experience of the system was developing or improving from the perspectives of those they were in contact with within the system and to also gather opinions and experiences of those providing support. By the end of the project, two surveys were conducted with case managers, two with the operational group, and one with legal representatives (see Appendix C for more discussion on the reflexive methodological approach).

Analysis of client data

Client data was also used to gain a better understanding of some of the effects that the Family Rights Service might be having. Client data was drawn from an extract of the SRC Salesforce database at various points however the data included in this final report is based on an extraction on 2024-06-10 and includes information on 207 FRS clients. This information included records of:

- Client characteristics, both individual and family e.g., age, number of children in the UK
- Asylum outcomes, including information on the date of an asylum claim, whether a client had a screening interview or been awarded refugee status
- Legal problems and issues, including whether a solicitor is responding to a client
- Applications and referrals, including the number of types of applications for support SRC has made for a client
- Action reports, including whether and with whom SRC interacted with an external stakeholder (e.g., TARA, Trussell Trust)

These datasets were linked using the unique identifier of each client (e.g. CLI-123456).

In agreement with the Scottish Refugee Council, the analysis of Family Rights Service client data was guided by two research questions:

1. Is there an association between clients experiencing legal problems and their asylum outcomes? The particular outcome of interest is being granted refugee status.
2. Is there an association between how long a client has been part of the Family Rights Service and the level/type of applications and referrals made on their behalf?

For both questions, the results are disaggregated by client characteristics including their country of origin, preferred language, initial age, and family profile. To ensure the findings are as robust as possible, statistical models are estimated in order to isolate the particular effect of a characteristic or variable. For the first research question, the outcome is binary (granted status or not), therefore logistic regression models are estimated to produce the predicted likelihood of experiencing this outcome. For the second research question the outcome is numeric (number of applications/referrals), therefore count (poisson) regression models are estimated to produce the predicted number of outcomes a client experiences.

Ethics and Data Protection

The evaluation project received ethical clearance through the University of Stirling's General Ethics Committee (and any other required committee with SRC and other partners) on 17 October 2022. The team has been guided by the work under the ethical principles of the British Sociological Association (2017).

Throughout the research, the team has taken appropriate steps to ensure that participants are fully informed about the research process and informed consent is received. Information and consent sheets were sent to all potential participants outlining the project, their role, what participation would look like for them, as well as issues of confidentiality. Participation was always voluntary and those who took part were advised that they could withdraw their participation up to June 2024. Given the sensitive and traumatic experiences of navigating the asylum system, and in recognition that there is contact with numerous professionals and fear around status, the team has sensitively managed contact with families and any sensitive information that they have shared.

The following data types were created during the project:

Qualitative

- Data from focus groups, interviews, and WhatsApp diaries

Quantitative

- Survey results and analysis of client data files

All electronic data files have been stored on a dedicated University of Stirling (UoS) research SharePoint site; information on this provided by UoS is available here:

<https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/information-services-and-library/currenthttps://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/information-services-and-library/current-students-and-staff/researchers/research-data/students-and-staff/researchers/research-data/>.

This is a cloud storage solution within Microsoft Office365, protected by organisation-wide two-factor authentication, single sign-on through Active Directory, and encryption of data in transit and at rest, and is fully GDPR compliant. It is automatically backed up therefore any data accidentally deleted can be retrieved. Access to this project SharePoint site has been managed by the project lead with an appropriate level of access to relevant subdirectories of this site given to the wider project team.

SECTION FIVE: Key Themes and Findings

The following section reviews the findings from data collection conducted during the evaluation. The findings are separated into two parts. The first part deals with findings from the SRC administrative data on families. The second part includes insights from qualitative data collection.

Part 1: SRC administrative data on families.

The extent to which FRS has supported families can be seen in the administrative data on asylum outcomes and applications and referrals for support held by SRC.

Asylum outcomes

Insights from the client data provide evidence of the effectiveness of the case manager approach. Asylum outcome data were available for 150 FRS clients. 47% (70) of these clients had been granted refugee status at the time of writing; of the 80 without refugee status, 4 have had their claim accepted and are awaiting receipt of status documents, 9 have had their claim rejected and are appealing the Home Office decision, and 67 have no decision recorded yet. Clients without refugee status have typically been waiting 372 days since filing their asylum claim, compared to 470 days for those granted refugee status. The rate of granting refugee status for FRS clients is not designed to be compared to national granting rates calculated by the Home Office, as the population of asylum seekers participating in FRS is not a representative sample of all asylum seekers in the UK.

Fifty-one (25%) clients have had legal problems relating to their asylum claim, and 80% of those clients have experienced a single legal problem (most usually either an issue with the asylum questionnaire or not having a lawyer present at the initial meeting with SRC), though a small number have experienced more than one problem.

Figure 1 shows the association between the experience of legal problems and asylum outcomes for the 150 clients for which the latter are recorded. There is a slight, statistically insignificant increase in the probability of being granted refugee status if a client has experienced legal problems. Given the slight difference in this probability, it is sensible to treat this finding as inconclusive and that there is no strong evidence that the experience of legal problems influences the granting of refugee status.

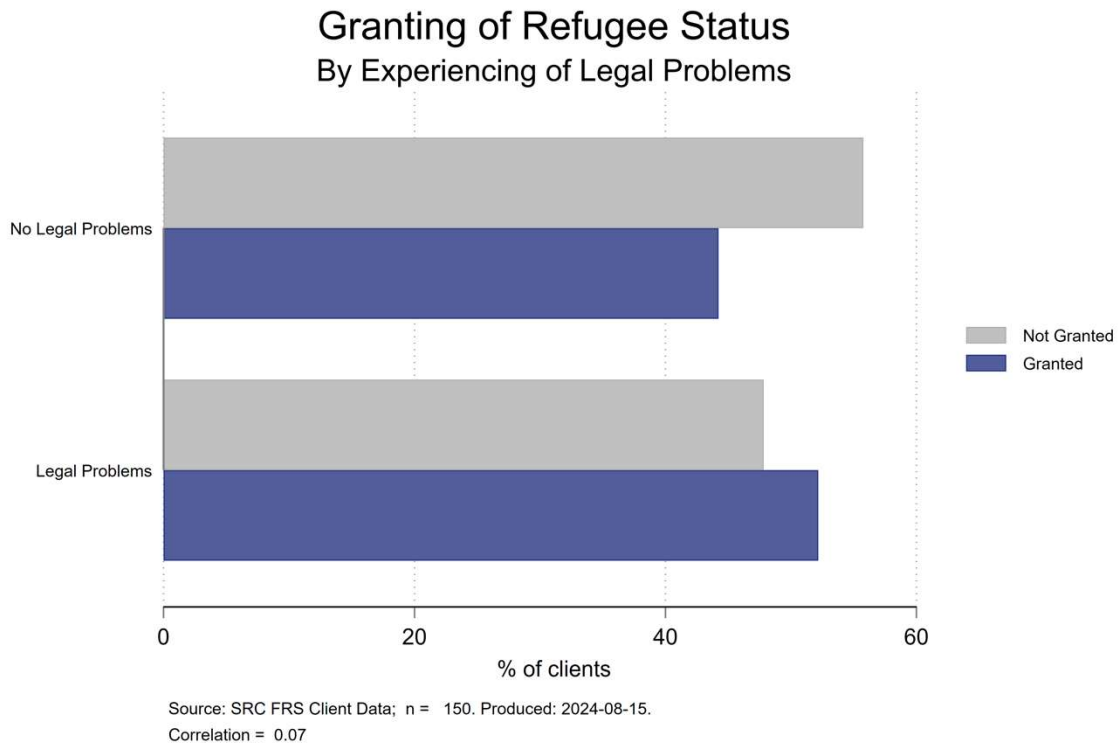


Figure 1 Probability of being granted refugee status, by experiencing of legal problems

We can explore the role of other factors in predicting whether a client is granted refugee status using a logistic regression statistical model. The granting of refugee status is assumed to be associated with certain client characteristics recorded by SRC that include but are not limited to: whether a client experienced legal problems, their legal firm, how long a client has been part of the FRS programme, the number of action records they have, the number of monetary and non-monetary applications made on their behalf, their age when they first engaged in FRS, their gender, preferred language, country of origin, and whether they have children in the UK. In addition to this, granting status is a function of Home Office decision-making, information regarding country of origin, relevant guidance, and individual grounds for protection.

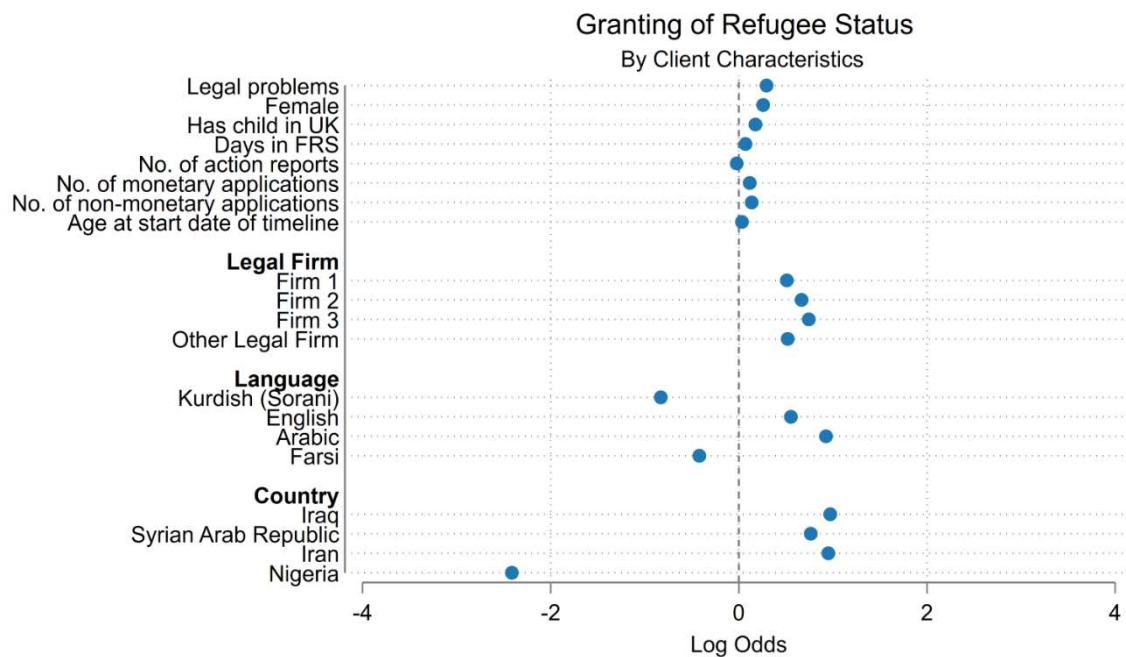
Figure 2 displays the results from this statistical model. Log odds represent the change in the odds of a client being granted asylum status attributed to a given client characteristic:

- Positive values (to the right of the dashed line) represent an increase in the odds of the outcome occurring
- Negative values (to the left of the dashed line) represent a decrease in the odds of the outcome occurring

For example, clients from Nigeria have lower odds of being granted asylum status compared to other countries of origin. None of the findings presented are **statistically significant**, which impacts our confidence in the likelihood of the results translating to a wider population; however the small sample size is a contributing factor to the lack

of statistical significance, and generalizing to a wider population may not be meaningful given the focus is on evaluating the impact of FRS on the clients who did participate.

Experiencing legal problems, being female, having a child(ren) in the UK, spending longer in FRS, having more action reports or (non)monetary applications and referrals, and being older initially are all **not associated** with being granted refugee status – this is indicated by the log odds being very close to zero. Put another way, once we know a client’s legal firm, preferred language, and country of origin, it is not important to know whether they are female or have spent longer in FRS etc., to predict whether they have been granted refugee status.



Source: SRC FRS Client Data; n =149. Produced: 2024-10-31.
Adjusted R-Squared = .12

Figure 2 Probability of being granted refugee status, by client characteristics

Compared to having no legal firm recorded in the data, clients with legal representation are more likely to be granted refugee status. A client’s preferred language is associated with refugee status: English and Arabic-speaking clients are more likely to be granted this status, while those speaking Kurdish (Sorani) are less likely relative to all other preferred languages (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese). Compared to other countries – those with the fewest number of clients e.g., Uganda, Libya –, clients from Syria, Iran, or Iraq are more likely to be granted refugee status, while those from Nigeria are considerably less likely.

Applications and referrals for support

Part of the role of the Case Managers in ensuring that families are best supported is making applications and referrals to external partners in the sector. Applications and

referral data were available for 191 FRS clients. SRC classifies these applications and referrals for support under a wide range of headings, including “health”, “social connections”, and “non-monetary hardship”, amongst others. To summarise this variety, the evaluation team categorised applications and referrals as “monetary” and “non-monetary”. Monetary support refers to applications for destitution / financial hardship grants on behalf of clients, as well as seeking financial support for schooling costs. Non-monetary support takes the form of assistance with the administration around ESOL assessments and courses, digital inclusion initiatives, access to schooling, etc. In addition, we calculate the proportion of applications and referrals that are non-monetary. Typically, 80% of all applications and referrals are non-monetary but this does vary by certain client characteristics:

- Clients with children in the UK have a higher proportion of monetary applications and referrals than those without children. This potentially suggests that families are more likely to find themselves with greater financial challenges requiring immediate attention from other organisations or partners. The FRS aims to be an accessible point of contact where families can indicate they need financial support. The high proportion of family applications suggests the FRS successfully provides this support.
- Clients speaking Kurdish, Pashtu, and Swahili have a higher proportion of monetary applications and referrals compared to other languages including Turkish, Urdu, and Albanian. This demonstrates that the needs of families vary by characteristics such as cultural background. Although it is difficult to make claims on why these differences exist, these findings provide insight into the specific and complex needs of certain families. This provides evidence for a service that respects diversity within an asylum system that attempts to universalise the particularities of experiences. In addition, these findings can be used to indicate where case managers should potentially direct their support.

Gender or country of origin is not associated with what proportion of applications are non-monetary.

The typical length of time a client has spent in the FRS is 373 days and there is a clear association between how long a client has been part of FRS and the number of applications and referrals made on their behalf, though it is slightly stronger for non-monetary (Figure 3). Put otherwise, the longer families are in the FRS, the more applications are likely to be made. Long duration in the FRS represents how long families are in the asylum system more generally. As this is an end-to-end service, families cease to be clients once a final decision has been made on their claim. Asylum seekers are excluded from employment and social security while their claim is determined, instead, they are reliant on subsistence payments and accommodation that is provided through Asylum Support. Those who have not been granted status or are in the appeals process continue to require financial support.

Distribution of applications/referrals by FRS duration

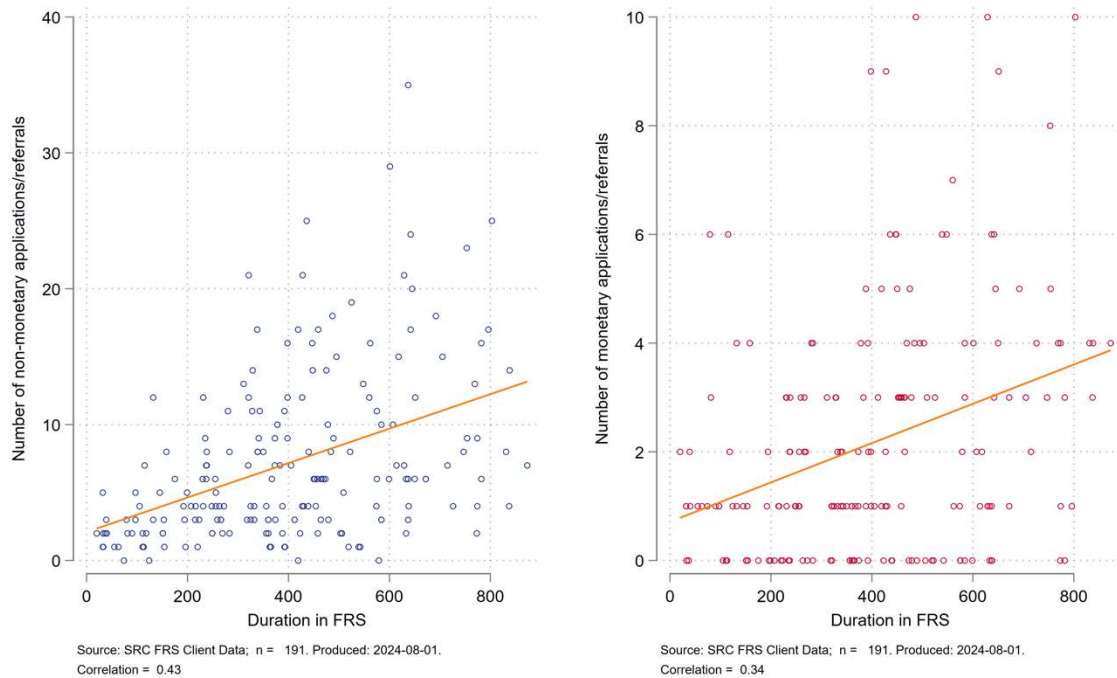


Figure 3 Association between duration in FRS and applications/referrals, by application type.

Note: Duration in FRS along the x-axis includes the number of days in which clients have engaged with the service. The dots represent individuals in the FRS. The orange line on the plots shows the direction of the relationship between applications and duration in the FRS. As the line slopes upwards, there is represents a positive relationship (more time in service = more applications made on their behalf).

We have explored the role of other factors in predicting the number of applications and referrals made on a client's behalf using a count regression statistical model. The number of applications and referrals made on a client's behalf can potentially be explained by whether a client experienced legal problems, their legal firm, how long a client has been part of the FRS programme, the number of action records they have, their age when they first engaged in FRS, their gender, preferred language, country of origin, and whether they have children in the UK. Controlling for a wide range of client characteristics enables greater confidence in the importance of duration in FRS as an explanation for how many applications and referrals are made on a client's behalf.

Figure 4 displays the results from this statistical model. IRR (incidence rate ratio) represents the change in the rate of occurrence of the outcome attributed to a given client characteristics.

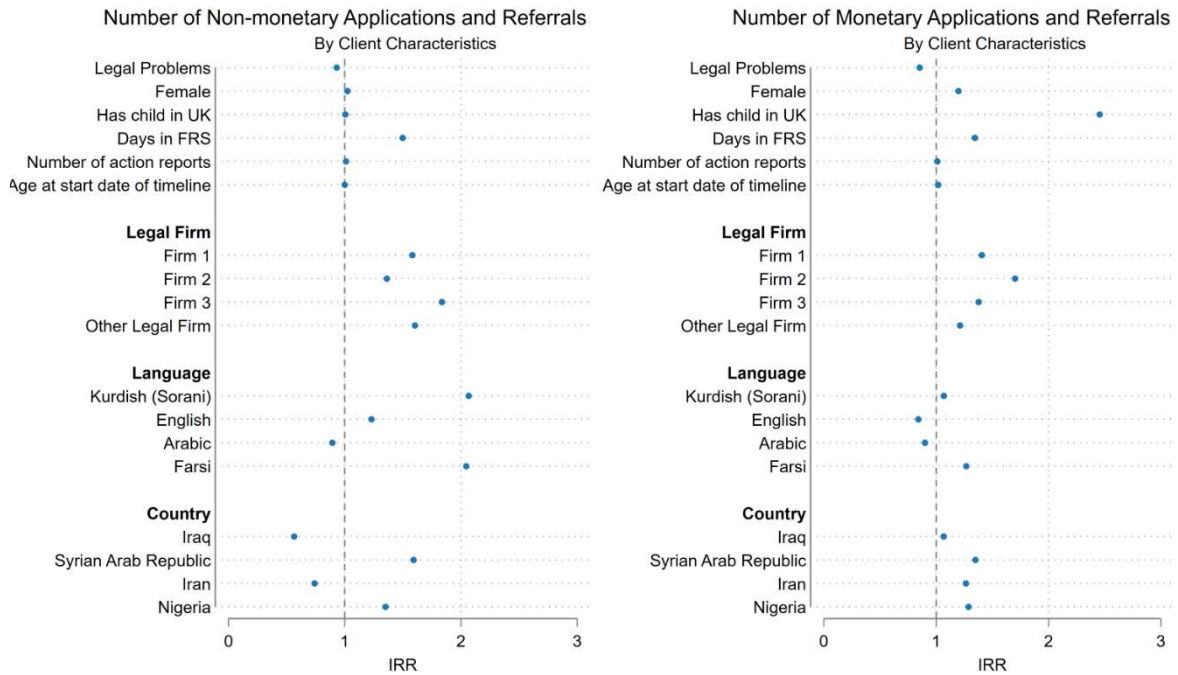
- Values greater than 1 (dots to the right of dashed line) represent a higher rate of occurrence of the outcome (i.e., more applications / referrals made)

- Values less than 1 (dots to the left of the dashed line) represent a lower rate of occurrence of the outcome (i.e., fewer applications / referrals made)

For example, the longer a client has been part of FRS, the higher the incidence rate (i.e., more applications/referrals). Some of the findings presented are statistically significant (as indicated by their confidence interval bars not overlapping with the value 1), which impacts our confidence in the likelihood of the results translating to a wider population; however the small sample size is a contributing factor to the lack of statistical significance for some findings, and generalising to a wider population may not be meaningful given the focus is on evaluating the impact of FRS on the clients who did participate.

There are interesting contrasts between the two outcomes in terms of which characteristics are associated with higher numbers of applications and referrals. For instance, living with children in the UK is not associated with a higher number of non-monetary applications and referrals, but is quite strongly associated with monetary applications and referrals. This shows further evidence of the particular financial challenges facing asylum seekers with children. Another example is duration in FRS: the longer a client is part of the FRS the more non-monetary applications and referrals are made.

Compared to other countries – those with the fewest number of clients e.g., Uganda, Libya, clients from Syria, Iran, or Nigeria experience higher numbers of monetary applications and referrals. However, the picture is mixed for non-monetary referrals: clients from Iraq and Iran have fewer applications and referrals made, while those from Syria and Nigeria have more. Although we cannot make any substantial claims about these differences, what this does show is further evidence of diversity in the experiences of families and potential groups who might require additional support. Finally, a client's preferred language is not associated with the number of monetary applications and referrals but is quite strongly related to the number of non-monetary applications and referrals, especially for Kurdish (Sorani) and Farsi-speaking clients.



Source: SRC FRS Client Data; n =187. Produced: 2024-10-31.

Figure 4 Rate of occurrence of monetary and non-monetary applications, by client characteristics

Note: Each dot on the plots represents how much or less likely the outcome is to occur for a given characteristic. For example, an IRR of 2 represents twice as many applications and referrals being made on a client's behalf (e.g., having a child in the UK and monetary referrals). An IRR of 1 means the same number of applications and referrals made (e.g., having a child in the UK and non-monetary referrals), and an IRR of less than 1 indicates fewer applications and referrals being made (e.g., being from Iraq and non-monetary referrals).

Part 2: Insights from primary data collection and outcomes of the FRS

The key themes that were discovered from the primary data collection of the evaluation are organised around five key themes. These are:

- (1) Ongoing overview of family needs through enhanced multi-agency collaboration
- (2) The value of the case management approach and understanding expectations of the role
- (3) The security and consistency of a key point of contact
- (4) Recognition of social connections as a need for greater integration and well-being
- (5) Facilitation of understanding and access to rights

1. Ongoing overview of family needs through enhanced multi-agency collaboration

Case managers' position within the sector means that they are suitably placed to develop wider and deeper understandings of the needs of families and can address them in a timely manner.

"I don't think you can really give a job description for this role to be honest. I think sometimes when you speak about the variety of what we do, people can't believe it" (Case Manager Focus Group 3)

A hallmark of the Family Rights Service is the space and encouragement it has created for a more collaborative, dynamic, and multi-agency approach to working with people seeking asylum.

"Our legal partners also seem to see the value in our work and have mentioned that they can see we are bridging a gap. I also think that external agencies like schools and health visitors appreciate the support we provide to families they are also working with, and feel confident in approaching us for advice or information about asylum seekers."
(Case Manager Survey 2)

By the conclusion of evaluation activity, data suggested that case managers built positive relationships with other services and legal representatives and in turn promoted a more collaborative system of support was clear. Organisational group members who have worked closely with case managers commented on the support case managers have provided them when working with families:

"Do you know...it's really nice having that kind of backup. It's nice knowing that you're not totally out there on your own. They [the case managers] totally understand what these families are up against. It's also great having somebody that knows about the asylum system, because it can be changeable...I know that I could phone and go 'Oh God what is section so and so?' I know I can Google it, and I have. But it's still good to have that support." (Health Visitors)

By ensuring that case managers are at the heart of a family's journey through the asylum system, equipped with their knowledge, training, and contacts, other agencies can rely on them too, for reassurance and clarification. A legal representative spoke about the ways that the consistent support from case managers has made their work with families easier, leading to positive changes such as reducing frustration among families and services. The solicitor we spoke to appreciated the case manager's ability to assist clients with ongoing welfare issues and additional needs. For example, the case manager helped the legal representative by gathering evidence for a family's

application for additional financial support that they were *entitled* to but had not been receiving. The family was facing significant challenges and struggling to obtain the necessary evidence from their GP for the application. Without the case manager and their confidence and skills in working across the sector, this responsibility would have fallen outside the solicitor's remit and onto the family to deal with alone. This presents a clear example of successful collaboration between legal representatives and case managers to benefit families overall.

The family-centred case manager approach allows for a better and importantly *ongoing* overview of family needs. For example, case managers are responsible for a 'broad range' of tasks in their day-to-day work (Case Manager Focus Group 2). These include:

“Education, school enrolments, college enrolments, ESOL classes, health, GP registration, dentist, opticians, physiotherapy. Whatever someone might need your support with. You’ve got housing, asylum support is a big one - there’s quite a lot of delays in the Home Office, providing asylum support. Often, we are making referrals to social work for emergency financial assistance, or reaching out to other organisations of projects that you know have funds you can apply to. Yesterday, I was arranging an ambulance to take my client home from the hospital, sometimes you’re booking baby classes - it’s very varied but we work with people from very different backgrounds, and cultures, you meet so many families in this job which makes it all worth it. It’s a good team to be a part of.”
(Case Manager Focus Group 3).

Families feel better supported in terms of welfare, social, and legal needs. Making families feel at ease and empowering them by explaining both complex processes and everyday life encounters, is building capacity, and allowing people to feel happier and more secure.

“[Scottish Refugee Council] are doing a lot of good work. Our family is pleased with the Family Rights Service and with our case manager. She does everything she can for us and the community: Doctor’s appointments, food banking, providing theatre tickets for the children, clothing vouchers, many other things that I don’t remember right now. More importantly, she listens to our voices. She explains the legal processes. I’m happy.” (Family 5 diary)

Some months later, this family wrote to say that their case had been rejected due to some errors with the Home Office, and although the case was complicated, their case manager explained everything to them and helped them by writing a letter of support. They are currently awaiting a further expert report to be sent to their legal representative as part of their case. The unique positionality of the case managers means that they can quickly identify a wide range of needs that a family may present

with, and make applications and referrals where necessary, as well as provide wider-reaching support.

The role that Case Managers play for families

[My Case Manager] helped take some stress off me at a time I was really confused and depressed. It was a time I had nothing and when I mean nothing, I couldn't even feed my children after being housed in a hotel by my social worker with Home Office not giving us accommodation and financial support, and a lawyer that was not helping matters.

It was after meeting my case manager I was able to weather the storm and with her help was able to explain the process and how I can be able to walk through the asylum process. She started by contacting my social worker to know about how far they can both work hand in hand to make the journey less stressful and bring me out of my depression state, especially by making sure my children attend school, help with vouchers and also register me to some volunteer organisations, mental health teams, and also taking myself and the kids out for fun activities.

Though in the midst of this, I was still emotionally down because the Home Office granted my section 95 but no help was forthcoming and I was living in homeless accommodation with little food, or at times nothing to eat as we are not used to the food served and they serve just breakfast and same sandwich as a packed lunch which affected my health and that of my children.

Aside from this, there was nobody to talk to, to ask questions concerning accommodation. No organisation goes in there, so I was really in the dark and will tag it my darkest moment in this journey. My children were lonely and sad and asking questions I couldn't answer.

I keep running to my case manager and at a point was thinking I was a burden but she is always willing to help and even the first to call when she did not hear from us to know how we are faring, and with her assistance and advice and letting me know it is not over, I started by changing my lawyer and was moved from homeless accommodation to Home Office accommodation after spending 7 months in homeless accommodation.

At this point, I could breathe a fresh air, even though I was still at a crossroad but it was better from where I was. I had access to speak to the accommodation team, different representatives of organisations, had access to health team and three square meals with a few options if you can't take the food served, and got access to have Home Office support.

My case manager has been helpful to make us understand the asylum process, most especially making me understand they can't decide or know what is going on at the Home Office but she is always in contact with my lawyer and myself to know how far we have gone and always reminding me to ask questions where am not clear.

(Family 2 diary. Selected entries have been combined to provide this overview)

The FRS has been successful in providing a more tailored, trauma-informed, and personal approach to challenges faced by people in the asylum system. Before the

implementation of the service, individuals and their families were left to navigate a range of services and manage alone, often engaging with solicitors and other organisations that were not equipped to identify or address the complex needs of people seeking asylum. This often resulted in inadequate support and increased stress for those navigating the asylum process. The stress of the system and experience was emphasised by all families, as well as those who support them:

“It is a very complicated life and I’m completely losing my sense of a human being. I’ve tried suicide 3 times.” (Family 6 diary)

The introduction of case managers has alleviated some of the alienation that is often experienced. Offering dedicated support, ensuring that individuals and families receive the assistance they need to access their rights and entitlements and more easily integrate into society, is central to well-being. Throughout the evaluation term, the evaluation team are confident that case managers have the appropriate trauma-informed training required to identify the traumatic effects of displacement and build this understanding into their practice. Data shows that they apply their extensive training in mental health awareness, domestic violence, understanding childhood trauma, trafficking awareness, and demonstrate a commitment to ongoing training and development. Such training and the development of knowledge over time should not be underestimated, particularly around issues of trauma.

All families seeking asylum will have experienced trauma in some form. One family expressed the fear, violence, and trauma they endured en-route to the UK:

*“Because of my work and the sensitivity of my workplace there was a huge problem in my life. I was facing the death of me and my family. We left, but soon we were in the hands of smugglers and they were very brutal. We were used as slaves by [organised crime groups] for five months. Then they brought us to the UK.”
(Family 6 diary)*

The patience, time, and attention dedicated to developing a more comprehensive understanding of those within the FRS were appreciated by all families during the evaluation, especially considering the complex nature of the asylum system and the uniqueness of each family’s background and needs. This complexity was something that case managers themselves grappled with at the beginning of their posts (Case Manager Group 3). Although families presented a variety of needs, it quickly became clear that welfare and mental health were central concerns.

“I wanted to end my life three times. I was preparing for suicide, but I didn’t do it, thinking about the kids. [My Case Manager] knew about

my situation, so she took care of me a lot, arranged more conversations and meetings, and guided me so that I could get treatment... She has given me a lot information about asylum rights, asylum law, Scottish law, Scottish society, the culture and behaviour of Scottish citizens” (Family 6 diary)

As the asylum process is characterised by waiting for indefinite periods, considerable stress and anxiety are experienced by families. It has been noted by families and key partners that Case Managers' quick response helps to alleviate some of this. One family, for example, spoke of “short waits” (Family Focus Group 3) before meeting their case manager for the first time.

One notable instance, demonstrating the importance of response rates, involved a case manager that swiftly intervened when a child needed urgent medical attention. Recognising the severity of the situation, the case manager immediately contacted emergency services, providing them with comprehensive details about the child's condition and medical history. Through their quick and decisive action, and knowledge of the family, the case manager prevented the situation from escalating, ensuring the child received timely and appropriate medical care.

Time and efficiency emerged as being an important factor in the success of the case management approach. We have mentioned the gratitude from families regarding the timely responses of Case Managers - which have in many cases led to saving lives - but they were also credited for their quick response to queries from legal representatives who either needed to contact families or who required completion of paperwork or other documentation to support the family's legal case. Legal representatives also recognised the value of having case managers add supportive clarification for the family during what are often intensive meetings. In particular, and in the realm of managing expectations, case managers are able to explain the remit of legal representatives and others across the sector in a way that is clear and accessible.

By adopting a holistic and trauma-informed approach, Case Managers develop a unique understanding of not only the needs of families, but the entire asylum support and legal system. No other service is positioned to oversee, understand, and be in contact with (and across) the full range of organisations needed to support one family, or indeed one person, seeking asylum. Furthermore, the information that is gathered by Case Managers is shared with other key partners when applications and referrals are made, through supervisory and advisory meetings, and by increased interactions with other professionals, improving sector collaboration.

2. Value of a case management approach and understanding expectations of the role

Before the Family Rights Service, families seeking asylum lacked a consistent point of contact. While advisers existed both within and outside the Scottish Refugee Council, their support was often fragmented. Legal representatives, though offering some continuity, typically had limited capacity to provide broader social support. The close collaboration between case managers and legal representatives has bridged this gap, enabling case managers to understand key aspects of the asylum process. This understanding allows them to address issues like missed legal meetings or communication concerns. In a system filled with uncertainties, the case manager provides a vital sense of consistency and reliability, becoming the trusted, 'known' presence for asylum seekers.

*“I was speaking to a health visitor the other day who supports my client. And she was like “she [the client] has no idea who anyone else is, but you – she knows who you are”
(Case Manager Focus Group 2)*

The quote highlights the critical role case managers play in the asylum system, distinguishing them from the numerous professionals and organisations that families interact with. Participants in the evaluation strongly agree that the case management approach is highly effective, enabling better oversight and coordination of support for families across various organisations.

Over time, the data revealed that case managers grew more confident in defining the scope of their role. They clearly understood the primary purpose of their work, which was to “help people understand what to expect from the asylum system and how to navigate it” (Case Manager Focus Group 1). During one focus group with case managers, they discussed the formal and managerial tone of the term ‘Case Manager,’ but overall felt empowered by the title. They believed it closely reflected the broad range of support, guidance, and advice they provide, as well as strengthened their confidence when advocating for families with legal representatives and other organisations. Families consistently reported that case managers had been instrumental in advocating for them and their requests for support, whether with legal representatives or other relevant partners.

In the final focus group, case managers expressed that they had become more informed about the asylum system in practice and felt more equipped to contact and, when needed, challenge legal representatives and stakeholders. This was facilitated by close contact between the case manager team which offered support and empowerment. We found strong congeniality between the case managers who enjoyed working with and supporting each other. It was also noted that having an

experienced case manager on the team who offered meaningful practical and emotional support to managers newer to the service, was invaluable:

“I need to give a huge shout out to the team who are all so knowledgeable, so experienced and just ... I don't think you could do this job [without each other], even now that I know a little bit more...we lean on each other so much for support - practical and emotional” (Case Manage Focus Group 3)

Case Managers see the value of their work. They found making ‘meaningful changes’ to family’s lives rewarding, despite the overwhelming and ‘intimidating’ caseloads that were described by one case manager as ‘on the verge of too much’ (Case Managers Focus Group 3):

“I enjoy my role a lot as it allows me to provide emotional and practical support and guidance to clients navigating the asylum process and adjusting to life in a new country. I find the role mostly uplifting but I find it challenging managing caseload of clients due to the complexity of need and the barriers clients are faced with every day. This means that demand is persistent, and it can be easy to burn out” (Case Manager Survey 1)

Caseloads were a recurring topic of discussion among case managers. While families noted no explicit signs that their case managers were under pressure, many expressed a reluctance to burden them further. Case managers reported typically working with 15 to 25 families, though caseloads could reach up to 50 in some instances. Considering the ever-changing needs of families and the diverse responsibilities case managers must fulfil, this poses a risk that the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) will need to carefully manage and monitor around staff well-being and turnover. As an evaluation team, we acknowledge the significant time demands created by communication challenges, particularly across language barriers. With WhatsApp being the primary communication tool for case managers and families, both groups highlighted the complexity and effort involved in keeping abreast of conversations and the constant translation and interpretation that is required, a notable challenge in itself.

Despite the many challenges and pressures that they face, case managers expressed gratitude for the practical and emotional support available to them. They valued the guidance provided by mentors and supervisors at the SRC and legal firms, as well as the opportunity to take part in voluntary clinical group supervisions with a psychologist formerly associated with Freedom from Torture. This recognition highlights not only their dedication to understanding the needs of the families they support but also their

commitment to prioritising their own mental well-being. Opportunities for communication and collaboration within the team of case managers and across organisations reflect the core values of a case management approach.

From their first meeting with a family, case managers maintain regular contact, explain the complexities of the asylum system, attend meetings, organise hospital appointments, and manage school administration for children. As one family described, “She does it all” (Family 1 diary).

The advocacy role of case managers was repeatedly emphasised. Stakeholders and legal representatives identified the FRS as a “critical” resource for families upon entering the asylum system (Mears Focus Group). Early intervention was recognised as one of the service’s key strengths. Legal representatives particularly commended case managers for supporting clients with additional needs, providing a listening ear for concerns that solicitors often lack the capacity to address. This advocacy and welfare support fill a crucial gap, ensuring families receive the holistic assistance they need.

At the start of the evaluation, some relationships between case managers and legal representatives experienced challenges. These arose from differences in priorities and a limited understanding of the case manager’s role and the scope of the new service. This sometimes led to miscommunication and delays in coordinating support for families. Legal representatives from two firms suggested that the proactive nature of the service may have contributed to these initial tensions:

“It can potentially give the impression to some solicitors, who you know are not used to working and seeing case managers face to face, etc, that they are possibly verging on stepping on toes when, you know, [case managers] are asking if something has been done.”
(Solicitors)

We believe this observation is further supported by the low response rate from legal representatives invited to participate in the evaluation, as discussed in section four. Some legal representatives suggested that more effort could be made to raise the profile of case managers among other legal firms. Drawing comparisons with Guardianship Scotland, they noted that as the service matures, other legal representatives are likely to “appreciate its value” (Solicitors).

Additionally, the service’s emphasis on increasing accountability and transparency within the asylum process may have made some stakeholders uncomfortable, particularly in the early stages. By facilitating greater oversight and highlighting gaps in communication or support, the service challenges existing practices in ways that not everyone may initially welcome. In the short term, our data indicates that more

work is needed to enhance awareness and understanding of the service among legal professionals, in particular.

While case managers' confidence in their role grew over time, there was variability in the wider understanding of the Family Rights Service and the role of the case manager among different organisations and legal firms we spoke with. In general, those who had engaged with the service held positive views of the case managers:

“Yeah, I work quite closely with one of the families just now, and she [the case manager] has been absolutely fantastic... She's been supporting this family by helping mum with registering her boys at school and nursery... She helps with the financial side as well. She can get them emergency food vouchers and stuff. She's done that, and she goes to appointments with them as well. So, she'll be going to appointments with mum for like maternity services, 'cause mum is pregnant. She also goes to lawyers' appointments, Home Office appointments with her. And so, yeah, it's a great service.”
(Health Visitor)

Senior stakeholders within organisations generally had a more comprehensive understanding of the service and its value. This awareness likely stems from their involvement in strategic meetings and other forms of communication with the Scottish Refugee Council. Throughout our evaluation, many individuals expressed a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the specific responsibilities of a case manager and how they integrate into the asylum process and family support systems:

“I think there is an overall understanding about the key principles of what they're [case managers] trying to deliver. But I don't think there's much of an output and presence around what they've actually done to support families.

And you know, they don't have to be, you know, they can be confidential. But actually giving some case studies around how people in our care have been supported by this service and what the benefits have been, that gets to the hearts and minds of our welfare officers and housing managers and they'll probably have engagement with the service and sell that directly to the families.”
(Mears Group)

Aside from not fully understanding the role or the service, no negative comments were made about Case Managers or the case management approach the service had adopted.

[Managing expectations and boundary setting within a case management approach](#)

Understandably, families sometimes needed clarification on which service we were referring to when discussing the FRS. We believe this reflects the broader complexity of the asylum system and the multiple organisations families interact with, rather than a shortcoming of the FRS itself. However, case managers highlighted significant improvements following the easing of lockdown restrictions, noting that the return to face-to-face communication greatly facilitated relationship building and eased concerns:

“The relationships are different when you meet them face-to-face, when you talk to them on the phone, there is less compassion for each other.” (Case Manager Focus Group 2)

Frequent in person meetings with families helped them understand who different actors in the asylum system are:

“It makes a massive difference even for the clients to do with trust. A lot of people are supported by different organisations, it’s slightly a game of ‘Who’s Who?’” (Case Manager Focus Group 2)

In terms of face-to-face interactions, one case manager highlighted the challenges of arranging in-person meetings with clients who prefer phone conversations due to living far outside Glasgow. Despite this, the benefits of face-to-face contact for building relationships between case managers and clients are well-documented, making it essential to prioritise these meetings.

For instance, one case manager emphasised the importance of conducting initial assessments in person. They noted that even if families are reluctant to meet face-to-face afterwards, “having that initial meeting where they see your face and realise you’re a real person who wants to help and support them makes it more likely for them to attend future appointments” (Case Managers Focus Group 3).

Case managers also expressed that there is potential to increase home visits for these assessments and they would welcome more opportunities to do so. There are also practical benefits of in-person meetings, such as obtaining a signature from clients, which is required for some organisation and support applications.

As case managers were not only a practical point of support but also a social one, families expressed some struggles around knowing what they were allowed to ask of the case manager. For example, one family expressed concerns over asking too much.

Male Family Member FG1: “We are a bit shy. Shy to ask for help every now and then from the case manager. Because we know she will do everything, so we’re a bit shy sometimes.”

Female Family Member FG1: “I remember once I asked for an appointment with the case manager. I told her I was feeling shy and that I felt like we were asking too many things of her. She always says do not hesitate – don’t feel shy, I’m doing my job, and this is part of my job so you’re welcome to contact me any time.”

Male Family Member FG1: “But again, we’re shy to ask for too many things from a single person.”

Similar expressions of uncertainty were also expressed across diary data:

“She [case manager] is an angel. I am happy with her. She help me when things are not good. I know I can message her, but I do not want to be a burden and message all the times” (Family 2 Diary)

Boundary setting and expectations were a frequent point of discussion with case managers. Case managers noted that families sometimes had unrealistic expectations, believing that they could ‘basically do everything for them’ (Case Manager Focus Group 3). This overestimation of their capabilities sometimes led to a perceived ‘lack of respect’ for the case managers’ time and boundaries (Case Manager Focus Group 1).

CM1: “So, I would say, on the whole, it is positive, but there are issues with managing expectations and understanding of time scales and your own capacity.”

CM3: “There’s this thing, maybe the misunderstanding of your role and our role, and there is the element of them probably overestimating the power of what I can do. And that’s another thing, most are respectful of my time and my role, but they just sometimes overestimate what I can achieve and what I can do.” (Case Manager Focus Group 1)

*“Even if there is something we can’t explicitly do, we do our best to seek out other organisations or supports that can do it. We never give...well never say never... we would rarely give an explicit “no”, necessarily. We often, even if we can’t, we do our very best to find someone or find something that can do that.”
(Case Manager Focus Group 3)*

A strategy for managing expectations was discussed with the SRC in the first six months of the evaluation as an early recommendation. This was put into action through clear discussions in the initial meetings, as well as regular reminders of

expectations and boundaries throughout their work with clients. Over time, case managers expressed feeling more confident in setting boundaries and were supported to do so within the SRC. Challenges around expectations are likely to persist throughout any service of this nature, often reflecting the anxiety and pressures faced by people seeking asylum.

Given that the case management approach is person-centred, with frequent contact with families, case managers also noted a challenge in the development of friendships or friend-like relationships with those they support. Given the limited opportunities for meaningful social connections within the asylum journey, this is also likely to be an ongoing challenge with this working style. Case managers mentioned that this was especially true for single-parent families and the friend-like relationships that develop.

“... for some of them I’m the first person they’ve spoken to when they’ve come to the UK. Bear in mind we’re taking them on outings, so we’re doing things with them, we’re chatting to them. When there is no language barrier as well, they speak English, they start to see you as a friend and then... I find that really challenging.”

(Case Managers Focus Group 1)

Case managers consistently highlighted that the blurring of boundaries was an ongoing challenge and expressed a desire for more focused counselling or training on this issue. While there was a clear need for additional training, over the evaluation period and during the reflection spaces provided in focus group discussions, case managers felt they had made personal progress in setting boundaries with clients. One case manager explained that she has adjusted her approach to initial assessments, now clearly communicating both what she ‘can do’ and what she ‘can’t do’ (Case Manager Focus Group 3). Other case managers noted that in setting boundaries, they have had to be firm but also respectful, framing boundaries as a means of building individuals’ capacity and empowering them.

“I tried to approach it [setting boundaries] in the way, like, I’m not always going to be here for you and I’m here to support you right now, but I also want you to have a very successful and independent life in the UK after you get status. And a part of that is figuring out how these systems work and navigating them.

A lot of it [the client’s concerns] are health care related, and they get very frustrated with the healthcare system and how GPs work...they get cancelled because there are no interpreters...they have to get medication every seven days. They just find it very difficult. But yeah, I framed it in a way...that I want you to be independent and want you to be in the UK for a long time and that means figuring out how to do these things. Obviously, I’m here to advocate and help with that, but I’m not always going to be here. It would be a

disservice of me to do all of that for you and for you to never have those times of learnings for yourself.

And I came back from annual leave, and they [the client] was like 'I want you to know I have had two dentist appointments and I've made a GP appointment'. And I was pleased. I think framing it in, like, this is going to be actively harming you if I [the case manager] do this forever, because I won't to be here for you forever. I think that's been a successful way, that's worked in terms of boundaries with clients." (Case Manager Focus Group 3)

3. Security and consistency of a key contact from point of entry

"Often we are the first people they meet in the UK, or the first type of support they receive." (Case Manager Focus Group 3)

*"My case manager has helped me with everything. If I need something, I message, and she always tries to find it for us."
(Family 4 diary)*

The evaluation revealed that, early on, families were supported with the difficulty of navigating asylum processes and support by case managers who provided a stable point of contact. The consistency that the service provides should not be underestimated. Case managers help to establish greater feelings of safety and security:

"Even when there are no issues and we don't contact her [the case manager], she will contact us to double check that everything is fine, asking about the children. She's very helpful towards the children - she always doubles checks they are fine and if there is anything she can do." (Family Focus Group 1)

Families also spoke of the ways case managers not only advocated for them but also treated them with dignity and respect. Given that the asylum system works to eradicate a sense of self-worth, the person-centred and trauma-informed approach of the Family Rights Service is important for ensuring recognition and empowerment:

We know that the [Family Rights] service and the [Scottish Refugee] council are independent. We know they have limited capacity. They cannot offer help with everything. But within their capacity they are

doing a great job. Unlike the other organisations and other places – here we feel like we are human beings. Just here.
(Family Focus Group 2)

*

Male Family Member FG2: “Within one week from our [first] contact, she [the case manager] met us at our hostel. When we met her, we were very stressed. She came with two of her colleagues. She was...”
Female Family Member FG2: “She had smiley face, she was really enthusiastic, and she gave us a big belief.”

Male Family Member FG2: “She like broke our fears. We were alone before meeting her because of the language barrier. After we met her [the case manager] we were relieved, and we felt we are not alone anymore. We had a feeling that we are not alone here and there are some people that can provide help if we need it.”

Case managers also highlighted the value of the consistency of their support. While the title ‘case manager’ does reflect the work they do on paper, they pointed out at a later focus group that it perhaps fails to fully capture the extent and regularity of the assistance offered, the collaborative nature of their job, and the ongoing mental health support and reassurances they provide for people. Despite maintaining professional boundaries, one client stated their case manager is ‘like a sister’ (Family Focus Group 3). This underscores both the loneliness of the family within the system as well as the regularity of support and care, making case managers significant people in the process of seeking asylum.

“We are there holding their hand throughout the entire asylum process. Other agencies don’t do that. They see you as a friend.”
(Case Manager Focus Group 1)

“She [case manager] saved me. I wanted to take my life, to kill myself but I messaged her and she help m,e and she tell me places to go for help. My dear, she is great.” (Family 1 diary)

With many uncertainties in the asylum process, the ability to be in touch with Case Managers and be confident that they are well versed in a families’ case was important for families. This up-to-date knowledge was recognised by both case managers and key partners, too, for saving time. While some familiarity may build over time due to regular contact between employees of other organisations and the families, the attention to the specific cases and life stories meant that Case Managers were able to offer explanations about families’ situations to all those involved in both the legal and support systems. Recognising what they can and cannot do, this ongoing and collaborative contact helped to alleviate stress and anxiety.

“If someone comes along and says we’re going to help you with all these things, of course you’re [families] gonna be like...that’s great, especially when you’re being met with potentially silence from your lawyer, no feedback from your housing provider, no positive outcomes when you’re talking to Migrant Help or MEARS.

People are asking for food for example, the most basic thing people should be provided with, and they [organisations] can’t even make food not spicy for someone who’s just given birth. I feel like people respond positively because we’re saying we’ll try help with that, and when you do get outcomes, and even just treating people with decency. You know, just listening to someone and understanding, and giving them the space just to talk about what their problems are.”
(Case manager Focus Group 1)

The support provided and the care shown to families extend beyond their time in the service. While contact becomes less frequent, case managers emphasised that they do maintain ongoing connections.

“Someone who’s got status and moved on to the RIS team [Refugee Integration Team], she just sent me a picture before we came in here. She got a certificate to say she finished college...and it’s like...aww you’re still keeping me in mind. We always say “don’t forget us, when things happen, we still want to see photos. I want to know how you’re getting on... You know I was the second person that she [her client] phoned when she got status. It’s like...you’re there for people in a meaningful way. You’re considered when things happen for them. They know we’re so on their side, so they want to tell us and involve us in that – that’s a nice thing.”
(Case Manager Focus Group 3)

4. Recognising social connections as a need for greater integration and well-being

As highlighted in the previous sections, the connections that Case Managers facilitate—both among asylum-seeking families and with wider Scottish society—are essential for families' mental health, well-being, and sense of belonging and integration. Case Managers frequently organise social outings and encourage participation in seasonal events and parties hosted by the Scottish Refugee Council and other organisations. While these efforts were widely appreciated, families expressed a profound sense of constraint stemming from the legal limitations of the asylum process concerning financial support.

Female Family Member FG1: ... “I can’t go for an outing with my friend, for example, we can’t take our kids to any activities, we’re just staying at home and like going to the garden, trying to do anything but it’s not ideal. The money they give us is just enough for our food and that’s it and that’s a big problem for us.”

Male Family Member FG1: “My wife and I haven’t gone to a place to have a cup of coffee or a tea for eleven months. This, our life was not like, this is not our life or...”

Female Family Member FG1: “Also one question to raise about the government. They give us some money for food and other stuff, but they don’t give us a bus pass but not us, why? What is the point.”

Male Family Member FG2: “And they’re talking about integration... how can I integrate with someone who I cannot talk to or communicate or have like a sit down with him somewhere, how?”

They highlighted the tension between the financial constraints they face and their strong desire to integrate into society and support their children in doing so.

“We’ve never, both of us, had any help or support from anything we don’t accept it (back home). And here (The UK) ..they don’t allow us to work and that’s why. And the money, it is not enough for anything. You have to manage. How can I manage with £40?”

My oldest son, for example, sometimes his friends are inviting him out to an outing so at least I have to give him £20, so if he goes twice a week that’s the £40 finished. The other day his friends invited him to a trip to Edinburgh and I had no money, so I told him ‘sorry you can’t go’, ‘just tell your friend that you can’t go’, the friends realised he didn’t have money and they said ‘don’t worry, just come you have a bus pass we’ll manage the situation’. So it’s a very hard situation for us.

I brought up our kids in a very good circumstances [back home] so I am really shocked about their current situation, especially in such a democratic country, why should these things happen.”

This frustration was reflected in the diaries of families, too:

“The thing is there is a limit to what you can hide from kids, I operate an open book with my kids and having gone through some phase of the reason why together, I have to explain to them but the only thing is they feel sad like they are not like others kids here ,like asking when they can travel for summer and have some basic things to have fun. And the day one of them said he felt like a prisoner, really

hit me so bad and to them they feel they are deprived of some things they don't need to ask permission before they get it.

*There was a particular focus on the value of these opportunities for young people, with case managers organising age-appropriate activities for families who were feeling frustrated and anxious during their stay in a hostel. Case managers provided information on how to get transport and what was available to do locally.”
(Family 2 diary)*

Case Managers also directed families to language learning opportunities and observed significant improvements in clients' English language skills through participation in ESOL classes and other related activities. Additionally, we believe that regular contact between clients and case managers played a key role in improving English proficiency. The evaluation team observed significant progress and growing confidence in one family's diary throughout the evaluation period. At the start of data collection, the family communicated solely in their first language. Over time, their messages became a mix of languages, and by the end, both the researcher and the family member were able to communicate effectively in excellent English.

Effects of the asylum process on children and young people

[Our] children are happy in this country. Okay, I mean after being through a really difficult time, a very difficult experience, they faced a lot of, I would say, fears during the journey and back in their country. So, they've been through a very difficult time. Thankfully they have been able to settle a little bit since they've been in this country and been able to study.

The other issues we have - and obviously which have affected me mentally and my husband's mental health - is that my older son wants to attend a gym on a regular basis. Unfortunately, due to not having a bank account, we cannot send [money] to the gym.

The financial support we get from the Home Office is not enough to cover that [the gym membership], to be honest with you. The younger generation have a lot of needs. School, they have homework to do at home, but due to lack of WIFI they cannot do homework. Due to a lack of bank account, we cannot provide WIFI for them. In these terms they are suffering, to be honest with you. It is affecting them emotionally. They always have some sort of sadness inside them, they think they are different from the other children.

Unfortunately, we cannot do anything. Financial difficulty and lack of services means we cannot provide. We would be grateful if my son could get a gym membership or [a] smart tablet, or even the WIFI to be provided so they can do their homework properly or to spend their spare time on the iPad or YouTube, for example. It was a bit boring during the school holiday because they could not do any activities, there was nothing to do. Gladly, they will be back to school, hopefully that will improve their mental health a wee bit and take out the stress.

(Family Focus Group 1)

While the FRS was initially established to provide additional support to families during the legal asylum process, it has become clear that addressing families' welfare needs has occupied much of the Case Managers' time. This is largely due to the operational structure of the FRS, where the close contact between families and their Case Managers allows for more immediate resolution of pressing needs. In some cases, the complexity of families' welfare requirements and the time needed to secure appropriate support have taken precedence over efforts to facilitate legal representation:

“It feels like we’re expected to do so much legal stuff but then you get so bogged down with the welfare stuff you can’t keep up with it. Because I try to get involved in people’s legal cases, like I start going to lawyers appointments, but then you’ve got a client whose... maybe they’ve lost their payment card, they’ve got no money... or they’ve moved house and their kids have changed school, they’re upset the kids have not been in school... and you just end up doing all that and you think ‘oh, I’ve been neglecting all the legal side of things’... but we do, that’s something we are prioritising at the moment, the legal side. We’re really, really trying, but it’s just people get let down by Migrant help and Mears and stuff, from when they contact them, so you end up having to deal with it.”
(Case Manger Focus Group 2)

This is not to suggest that support during the legal process is entirely lacking; however, there is room for improvement. The asylum process itself is lengthy, and during this time, families often face urgent and immediate needs that can divert attention away from legal support. Strengthening the balance between addressing these immediate needs and providing consistent legal guidance could enhance the overall support for families.

Case Managers are highly aware of their role in facilitating capacity building and empowering individuals within an otherwise disempowering system. While families have expressed appreciation for the social connections and opportunities provided, many families struggle to fully engage due to challenges with poor mental health.

“In terms of social networks, basically we’re not very social people. We do not get involved with people. The reason behind this is that we’re still settling into this country. We have been through very bad experiences, we’re still new to this country, we’re still numb. The numbness has not gone away.” (Family Focus Group 1)

Despite these ongoing challenges, providing opportunities for connection has been crucial in building capacity among people seeking asylum. These opportunities enable individuals to use their skills in ways that adhere to rules of the system, such as through volunteering.

The theme of social connection emerged strongly throughout the data gathered during the evaluation. It became clear that this is not just about having a single point of contact or forming friendships. Rather, the Family Rights Service is uniquely positioned to foster community building and integration by also serving, among their many roles, as a ‘cultural informant.’

5. Facilitates understanding and access to rights

“The legal supervisions have also been crucial to the success of our work, especially at this important stage of people's claims. My personal reflection of this is that I have more confidence in myself when challenging bad practice, as well as confidence that my contribution has the potential to have a direct positive impact on my clients claims and their lives.” (Case Manager Survey 2)

A core aim of the Family Rights Service (FRS) was to enhance understanding of rights within the asylum system and improve access to them. This evaluation has found that the FRS, and the case manager approach it employs, successfully facilitates this understanding and access in ways that would not otherwise exist. Case managers play a crucial role in explaining processes, terminology, laws, meetings, and the roles of various organisations using a person-centred, trauma-informed, and rights-based approach. Throughout the evaluation, case managers have been consistently praised for empowering individuals to better understand their rights and build their confidence.

“They [case managers] have time to talk clients through the process in a bit more detail than legal reps perhaps are able to. So, to make sure that people are actually empowered, and they understand the process a bit better, I think they are a key part of that. So I work a lot with a company that helps asylum seeking children. They would be allocated at Guardian throughout the asylum process. The Guardian is exactly to kind of advocate needed for the asylum process. They make sure that they [clients] understand what's going on, make sure they are able to access their rights. And I see a comparison between that and what the case workers are trying to do. And I think it's something that is absolutely needed.” (Solicitors Interview)

By offering clear explanations and maintaining communication with legal representatives, case managers help clients stay informed and alleviate anxiety about the lengthy and complex legal system. This support is vital in helping clients understand their situation and feel reassured that they are doing everything within their power.

“My lawyer does not contact me, and I do not know when I will speak to them again... My case manager explained the process and told me that this can take a lot of time... If I did not know this [that the process is long and that there are long times of silence], I will worry more that something is wrong.” (Family 2 diary)

As time with legal representatives is limited, the focus is on ensuring that the formal legal application of asylum is correct. There is little capacity or time to check whether families understand what is happening. This is where Case Managers play an important role. In some cases, families are not always immediately informed of changes in their asylum claim or decisions made. For example, one family noted in their diary: *‘My asylum claim was denied, and I did not know’* (Family 4 diary). In this case, the Home Office sent a letter to the family’s legal representative five months before the family was informed of the denial. The family expressed their gratitude for their case manager, who advocated for them and provided regular updates. They felt confident that their case manager was in communication with the legal representative, providing them with much-needed clarity and reassurance.

SECTION SIX: Achievements of the Family Rights Service and Recommendations

The findings across the various themes provide valuable insights that collectively enhance our understanding of whether the main outcomes of the project have been met, offering a perspective on its effectiveness and any recommendations.

Greater oversight and easier identification of gaps in asylum system

The personalised case manager approach has provided families with the trust and comfort needed to seek comprehensive support, uncovering various gaps within the asylum system. Key gaps identified include communication issues with legal representatives and extensive waiting times for legal documentation, insufficient support from relevant organisations, and significant frustration among families due to restrictions on work and limited financial resources. Additionally, the lack of adequate resources impacts families' ability to engage socially, while confusion arises from navigating the multitude of actors within the system.

An analysis of client asylum outcomes emphasises the critical role of robust legal representation in obtaining refugee status and highlights the characteristics and circumstances that disadvantage certain clients in achieving this result. The operational and strategic groups supporting the Family Rights Service have played a vital role in enhancing transparency and accountability - not only within the FRS but also among group members and their affiliated organisations. These groups have been instrumental in identifying broader systemic gaps and facilitating discussions on appropriate measures to address them. The case manager approach has effectively bridged individual family needs by providing targeted assistance, yet collective challenges within the asylum process still demand further articulation and systemic solutions.

Capacity building and empowerment takes place through improved knowledge and understanding of asylum system

While advocating and supporting clients where necessary, case managers have shown significant progression over the evaluation term in setting clear expectations not only with families, but with other organisations and services, framing these boundaries respectfully and thoughtfully. They actively encourage clients to engage with the asylum system independently, understanding that their support will not always be available. Capacity building has in turn extended to other organisations and increased understanding of the asylum system. This approach is essential for clients to lead long and healthy lives in the UK.

Improved access to rights and support through greater collaboration and multiagency working

Case managers help clients by informing them on their rights and supporting them claim different entitlements. They extend their support even when they cannot immediately help with an issue, finding organisations or support forums that can. The case management approach has secured high and sustained levels of monetary and non-monetary support for families as they progress through the asylum process.

Key contact and consistency reduces trauma of asylum system

Case managers are central to the lives of families in the Family Rights Service. They are well perceived by not just families but legal representatives and other organisations. Case managers provide a person centred and tailored approach to meet the diverse and constantly evolving needs of families. Case managers stand out as beacons of hope and guidance in a confusing system with many different actors. While we cannot make casual claims about whether this reduces trauma as a result of the asylum system, the case management approach certainly provides a structured and supportive framework that can help address the unique needs and challenges faced by asylum seekers. Importantly, Case managers created trusted relationships with people and were also able to refer to specialist organisations which deal with complex trauma like the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Team and Freedom From torture

Faster response to poverty-related issues and early intervention means reducing crisis situations

By offering immediate advocacy and guidance to families, case managers help refugees navigate the complexities of their new environment, access essential services and address urgent needs. This proactive approach helps identify and mitigate potential issues before they escalate into crises. This ensures a smoother transition and promoting stability and well-being. Case managers assistance in applying to organisations and helping with entitlement to emergency funds offer quick solutions for families, ensuring they are not left destitute. 92% of families have been assisted with securing monetary and non-monetary support from external agencies, with the typical number of applications and referrals for support standing at 7. While not recorded in the client data given to the evaluation team, this level of support suggests timely and sustained intervention by FRS in alleviating poverty-related issues.

Recommendations

Throughout the course of the evaluation, the research team were in regular contact with the Scottish Refugee Council and provided recommendations through ongoing reporting. Recommendations were based on data gathered across the participant groups as well as ongoing observations. All recommendations made were done so with the sustainability and success of the service at their core.

Discussions on recommendations throughout the evaluation focused largely on ongoing monitoring and management of individual case manager workloads, emotional support for staff, setting clear boundaries and managing families' expectations, recording of information on the case management system, spreading awareness across relevant organisations of the FRS, and greater collaborative learning opportunities across the sector. It has been clear throughout the evaluation that the SRC are committed to reflexive practice and ensuring that the most effective and efficient delivery of support for the FRS.

The following recommendations are aligned with the aims of the Family Rights Service (FRS) and are categorized into internal management improvements and policy recommendations.

Internal Management: Enhancing operational efficiency

Data management and recording practices

SRC's administrative data on clients is a valuable source of insight on how families are progressing and supported through the asylum process. However, there are a number of possible improvements to how these data are collected:

Consistent stakeholder interaction records

In line with the FRS aim of piloting an effective case management model and improving sector collaboration, it is recommended to enhance the consistency of recording stakeholder interactions within action reports. This will allow FRS to track which legal firms are engaging with clients most frequently and assess the timeliness and effectiveness of these interactions, thus improving the overall experience and access to justice for participating families.

Quality assessment of legal interactions

To fulfil the aim of improving understanding and experience of the asylum system, the FRS should implement a process to record the quality of interactions between legal representatives and clients. This can be done either at the interaction level (with each action report) or at the client level (an overall evaluation). This approach will help ensure that families receive high-quality legal representation and support, contributing to increased access to justice.

Date tracking for applications and referrals

Recording the date of each application and referral made on behalf of clients would allow the FRS to measure how early interventions occur. This supports the aim of resolving gaps in support and creating a robust case management system. While this is already partially implemented, ensuring comprehensive data tracking will provide more insights into the timeliness and effectiveness of services provided.

Expanding face-to-face engagement

To improve the experience and confidence of families in navigating the asylum system, increased face-to-face interactions between Case Managers and families are recommended. This aligns with the FRS goal of reducing poverty and enhancing families' trust in the process. Outreach efforts should be balanced to avoid undue stress on families needing to travel, ensuring a supportive and accessible approach.

Inclusion of case managers with lived experience

In line with the aim to improve the asylum advice sector and create a sustainable support model, the inclusion of individuals with lived experience as Case Managers is recommended. Their firsthand understanding can enhance empathy and the practical delivery of support, fostering trust and effective communication. This approach not only benefits service users but also empowers former clients, contributing to their social and professional integration.

Policy Recommendations: Implications for broader policy and sector support

Impacts on legal representation and asylum outcomes

It is critical to highlight the finding that unrepresented clients are more likely to be refused asylum. This calls for policy adjustments by the Home Office (HO), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Scottish Government (SG), and Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) to ensure all asylum seekers have consistent access to legal representation. Strengthening this aspect of the asylum system will help secure fairer outcomes and fulfil the FRS objective of improving experiences and reducing poverty.

Mental health support integration

The pilot emphasised the significant mental health challenges faced by families during the asylum process. Addressing these challenges is essential for meeting the FRS's aim of improving the overall experience of the asylum process. Policies should promote collaboration between mental health services, the FRS, and other refugee support services to integrate comprehensive mental health care as a fundamental component of support. This trauma-informed approach supports the creation of a sustainable, person-centred asylum advice system.

Expansion of case management to all asylum seekers

To achieve the FRS's goal of creating a scalable and resourced model of support, an expansion of the service to all asylum seekers is recommended. The evaluation shows that the benefits extend beyond the 200 participating families, aiding legal representatives, families, and other supporting organisations. Broadening the case management approach reach would ensure humane and just conditions from the point of entry into Scotland. This approach aligns with the aim to improve the asylum system experience and foster long-term integration and well-being through a trauma-informed, person-centred model.

These recommendations are designed to strengthen the Family Rights Service's operational framework and guide policy enhancements, supporting the FRS's goals of improving the asylum experience, fostering collaboration, and ensuring a sustainable case management approach to the support of asylum seekers in Scotland.

Conclusions

Evaluation of the Family Rights Service's Aims

1. **Improving the experience and understanding of the asylum system for the 200 participating families, increasing access to justice, and reducing poverty:** Findings show that the Family Rights Service has been effective in meeting these goals, as families report enhanced understanding, access to their rights, and improved welfare outcomes.
2. **Piloting an end-to-end case management model, enhancing collaboration within the asylum advice sector, identifying and addressing support gaps, and creating a sustainable model for asylum advice:** The evaluation highlights that the Family Rights Service has successfully piloted this approach, fostering greater sector collaboration, identifying systemic gaps, and building a framework for a more sustainable asylum support system.

This evaluation allowed us to explore a case-management approach to supporting families seeking asylum. The Family Rights Service had been operational for seven months before our involvement began, and initial discussions with the Scottish Refugee Council and legal partners highlighted that Case Managers were dealing with highly complex cases. During the initial months, it became evident that due to the lack of transparency and organisation within the legal asylum system, Case Managers were not only focused on ensuring that families understood and accessed their legal rights, but also spent significant time addressing urgent social, economic, and health-related welfare concerns.

The original focus of the Family Rights Service was to provide newly arrived families with consistent and ongoing support to better navigate and understand the asylum process. However, it is evident that professionals and organisations offering support

across Scotland often find themselves simultaneously deciphering the complexities of the system. This was also the case for Case Managers. This is not a critique of the Family Rights Service or its Case Managers, who were described by families as 'angels' and 'sisters,' but rather a reflection of the asylum system. The findings underscore the need for greater clarity, enhanced multi-agency collaboration, shared learning opportunities, and an improved ability to identify the specific challenges faced by people seeking asylum - all areas where the Family Rights Service contributes significantly.

By providing end-to-end support from the initial meeting with a Case Manager, this evaluation has shown that the Family Rights Service's case management model ensures comprehensive oversight and facilitates the identification of systemic gaps through continuous interaction with families, legal services, and other support organisations. Families, in turn, benefit from having a consistent point of contact for clarification about the process and a better understanding of their rights, fostering capacity building and empowerment within an inherently disempowering system. The resulting empowerment can positively impact current and future integration and well-being, and the mental health benefits of this support have been repeatedly demonstrated in communications with families - in some cases proving lifesaving.

A key challenge for those seeking asylum is building a sense of community and social connection. Through its extensive network, Case Managers have established groundwork for greater capacity building by organising social events, facilitating volunteer opportunities, and maintaining oversight of other families and relevant agencies, signposting and advocating where necessary to ensure timely responses to needs. Building these relationships also creates spaces for people seeking asylum to (re)develop their sense of self-worth, often eroded by the asylum-seeking process.

While early interactions between Case Managers and legal representatives highlighted communication and relationship challenges, there is now evidence of improved understanding of the Case Managers' role as facilitators in the asylum process. Enhanced communication and information sharing - within and outwith formal meetings - are key to ensuring families receive the best representation and are fully informed.

Similarly, although the role of Case Managers was initially less understood by other agencies involved in supporting asylum-seeking families, this has improved over time due to proactive efforts by Case Managers and natural progression. This reflects the current clarity among Family Rights Service staff regarding the role and purpose of Case Managers, who now work more dynamically and flexibly. By the conclusion of this evaluation, Case Managers expressed feeling more empowered, families reported feeling less burdensome with increased communication, and respect for Case Managers across partners and other organisations grew as their vital role in facilitating collaborative work across the sector became evident. Continuous training has placed

Case Managers in a unique position to oversee the challenges faced by asylum seekers and identify systemic gaps. Improved multi-agency coordination and communication, and ongoing supervision and governance from two supervisory groups, further facilitate this identification

Families' lives have been significantly enhanced through consistent support from their Case Managers throughout the asylum process. Families frequently expressed deep gratitude for their Case Managers' detailed attention, advocacy, support, and encouragement. Case Managers have been quick to address welfare issues including destitution, poverty, practical needs, and social concerns. The voices of families were clear: they need assistance navigating formal and informal systems, and they believe the Family Rights Service provides essential signposting, clarification, and a sense of safety and support during one of the most vulnerable periods of their lives. Despite a system that often leaves them feeling disenfranchised and disenfranchised, families are empowered by their Case Managers to mobilise and access their rights. Without any other consistent points of contact within the asylum process, many are retraumatized by a system that should protect them.

Over the course of the Family Rights Service's operation and this evaluation, several legal changes have further restricted and complicated the ability of asylum seekers to mobilise their rights, creating additional anxiety and uncertainty in an already overburdened sector. This anxiety was felt by the evaluation team and those providing support. Through its holistic approach - addressing welfare outcomes, collaborating with various organisations, and focusing on all areas of need - the Family Rights Service has proven itself essential for families. We argue that services like the Family Rights Service should be available to all individuals seeking asylum, as they are not only necessary for day-to-day support but also critical for ensuring comprehensive legal and welfare assistance.

Overall, we consider the Family Rights Service to be well designed and positioned as a vital service in Scotland (and the UK) not only for families, but for all those seeking asylum.

Appendices

Appendix A: Case Manager Job Description

Job Title: Case Manager – Family Services

Reports To: Project Manager

Overall Job Purpose

To improve the experience of asylum-seeking families in Scotland by working with and supporting the whole family throughout the asylum process. The role will provide end to end case management working directly with families, acting as the key worker between immigration lawyers representing the families and other agencies in the process. The role aims to promote the integration and settlement of refugee families identifying and addressing needs, advocacy and service co-ordination to enable them to overcome barriers and fully participate in Scottish society.

Key responsibilities

Service Delivery

- Be the point of contact for families for all support from the start and throughout the asylum process
- Act as the link between services and professionals involved in the family's welfare
- Undertake an assessment of all individuals within the family unit to identify needs and pathways to address them.
- In a variety of formats provide relevant information, advice and advocacy to the family to support them to make informed decisions (asylum support, education, welfare support etc.)
- Provide advice and information to clients in their first language when required using interpreters and adhering to good practice standards
- Work with the main asylum applicant to ensure they are fully prepared to participate in asylum related processes from screening to the final decision
- Support the applicant in developing tools and techniques to help present their claim for asylum through lawyers and other agencies
- Ensure families understand the roles of the of key agencies and their rights to services/support

- Alert/flag on issues related to safeguarding of adults or children or where the family experiences signs of trauma
- Develop and action a family support plan
- Monitor and evaluate the delivery of services through good casework management and recording.
- Support the reporting requirements of the organisation by documenting and recording data/statistics using relevant databases
- Deliver outreach services in a variety of community settings.
- Establish effective communication with all those involved in the project throughout the development and implementation of the service.

Service Development

- Promote awareness of refugee needs and rights through provision of training, seminars, briefings, and electronic and written communications and by participating in appropriate networks and forums.
- Develop work practices and tools to promote and apply early intervention and GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child) approach and ensure evidence gathering of the impact of key work on the above.
- Initiate and carry out regular case reviews, identify patterns and support the development of the service and the organisation's advocacy role by identifying and providing case studies as required.

Other Duties

- Maintain the agreed quality standards and team standards in a consistent manner and across all functions.
- Develop good working relationships with internal and external services and organisations.
- Represent Scottish Refugee Council in a professional manner at all times.
- Undertake training and development activities as required to develop skills and abilities which will enable the post-holder to fulfil the purpose of the role and support the success of the organisation.
- Participate in and contribute to organisational/team meetings as required.
- Provide reports for senior staff and management as required.
- Ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with Scottish Refugee Council's
- Health and Safety requirements, values, equality aims, policies and procedures.
- Undertake any other appropriate duties as requested

Quality	Essential	Desirable
Education and Training	- Educated to higher level or demonstrate equivalent experience	- OISC Level 3 registered

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willingness to be trained as OISC level 2 advisor 	
Job Experience and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent communication skills (verbal and written) - Knowledge and experience of mental health, trauma, gender, homelessness and destitution - Good understanding of the systems, legislation and agencies involved in people seeking asylum - A good general knowledge of statutory and voluntary services and asylum legislation - Good understanding of anti-discriminatory practices - Experience of working with vulnerable groups and families - Good understanding of child protection policies - Proven ability to understand and advise on complex areas of legislation and policy - Effective negotiation skills - Excellent interpersonal skills and an awareness of cultural differences - Understanding of the need for impartiality and confidentiality - Good I.C.T. skills and knowledge of using databases and Microsoft - Ability to write reports and draft correspondence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience of working with interpreters - Fluency in relevant refugee language, both verbal and written - Experience of working with volunteers and students
Personal Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to reflect upon practice and be proactive in seeking improvement at case management and process levels - Ability to work in high pressure situations dealing with continuous sensitive cases - Empathy with asylum seekers & refugees - An excellent understanding of equal opportunities - Willing to travel to other locations within Scotland on occasion - Ability to maintain appropriate professional boundaries - Ability to work on own initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -

Appendix B: Membership of Groups

Membership of Partnership Operational Group

Project Manager Scottish Refugee Council
Monitoring & Evaluation Officer Scottish Refugee Council
Policy Manager Scottish Refugee Council
Solicitor Just Right Scotland
Solicitor Latta & Co
Rep Health and Social Care partnership
Rep Asylum Health Bridging Team
Rep Migrant Help
Rep MEARS group
Rep British Red Cross
Rep Govan Community Project
Rep Central and West Integration Network
Rep Community Info Source
Rep Refuweegee
Rep Maslows Community Group
Rep Refugee Survival Trust

Membership of the Strategic Advisory Group

Policy Manager Scottish Refugee Council
Project Manager Scottish Refugee Council
Monitoring & Evaluation Officer Scottish Refugee Council
Heads of Policy and Asylum Scottish Refugee Council
Solicitor Just Right Scotland
Solicitor Latta & Co
Rep Health and Social Care partnership
Rep Asylum Health Bridging Team
Rep Migrant Help
Rep MEARS group
Rep Scottish Government Justice Directorate
Rep Scottish Legal Aid Board
Rep Law Society of Scotland
Rep Home Office
Rep Immigration Law Practitioners' Association SILPA
Rep Consortium of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Migration Population and diversity team
Rep UN High Commissioner for Refugees UK representative
Rep Robertson Trust
Rep Justice Together
Rep British Red Cross
Rep NHS Education Scotland
Rep Integration Network Contact

Appendix C: Reflections on data collection

There were a number of challenges presented to the research team in gathering data during the evaluation as well as changes made to our initial approach after greater discussion with both members of the SRC and case managers in the FRS. While these were discussed with the Scottish Refugee Council throughout the process, and a more reflexive approach to data collection adopted, we have summarised the challenges below.

Recruitment for focus groups

Despite the initial intention to conduct mixed focus groups, recruiting legal representatives and stakeholders proved challenging. Non-response, limited capacity, and conflicting schedules made getting participations across organisations together in a (virtual) room difficult. The challenges in engaging legal representatives, particularly the pressure and workload they face were also mirrored in our data collection, where focus groups with case managers and families revealed similar communication challenges with legal representatives. For example, while progress had been made from the start of the pilot towards the end, communication challenges with legal representatives emerged as a prevalent issue for case managers and families alike.

Given the challenges we encountered, we adapted our strategy by setting up organisation-specific focus groups. These groups included participants from various positions, including senior roles, and we also conducted some one-on-one interviews. Although our data lacks cross-organisational commentary, our modified approach provided valuable insights into how the Family Rights Service is perceived and highlighted opportunities for enhancing its visibility within organisations. It's possible that these observations would have been obscured in the originally planned mixed focus groups, where participants might have not had as much time for reflection on these critical issues.

Overall, we believe that nonresponse and the lack of enthusiasm of mixed focus groups could also be indicative of gaps within the asylum system itself.

WhatsApp diaries required more prompts than anticipated

While some of the families initiated conversations themselves, the research team found that prompts were required more than anticipated. On reflection, while the use of WhatsApp was helpful for practical reasons such as translations and accessibility, physical diary packs may elicit greater engagement because they are not the 'normal' means of communication for families. This could be a future method of

monitoring and gathering data that the SRC incorporates in to the Family Rights Service

Low survey response

We aimed to collect regular survey data from case managers, legal representatives and key partners in the form of repeated short surveys over the duration of the evaluation. Unfortunately, apart from the case managers, the response rate of these surveys was low. We believe this reflects the current lack of capacity and resources within the legal sector and among organisations involved in the asylum system. Any relevant information from the short surveys will be woven throughout the findings.

Client administrative data

The main caveat with the analysis of client data is the presence of missing values. While common to most quantitative datasets, in this project it is difficult / impossible to divine why information is missing for a client e.g., date of asylum claim. This leads not only to a smaller sample size for some of the analyses, it also potentially leads to biases in the findings e.g., some clients do not have information on whether they had their substantive interview – do we interpret this as not having had their interview, or this question is irrelevant for this particular client? More practically in terms of the evaluation objectives, there are considerable missing data on interactions between SRC / FRS and client legal representatives. For example, there are records of clients where SRC has interacted with external stakeholders a number of times but without regarding the stakeholder's details: these clients have a legal representative recorded elsewhere in the data but it is impossible to tell how many of these interactions were with the legal representative, how long from starting in FRS to meeting their legal representative etc.

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