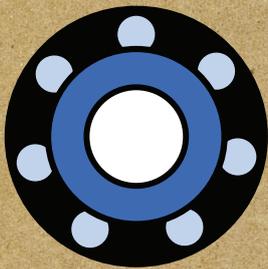


**OPERATION:  
INTEGRATION:**

# The Making of New Citizens



**The Forum**  
Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum



## The Forum

Migrant and Refugee  
Communities Forum

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February 2012

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# The Making of New Citizens

## **Contents**

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<b>What is the price of integration?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About the Forum</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Why talk about integration and why now?</b>	<b>5</b>
Values and Identity	
Politics and leadership	
Foreign Born British: Are they integrated or not?	
Don't Believe the Hype: Media on Migration	
<b>Origins of Integration Policy in the UK</b>	<b>7</b>
History Matters: Securitising Integration	
Civil Society, Integration and Human Rights	
Integration in Europe	
The Forum's London–Brussels Connection	
<b>What do migrants and refugees say about integration?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Forum's Model of Integration</b>	<b>12</b>
The Story So Far	
Working Together – Better for Less	
Mentoring for Integration	
Influencing Policy from Grassroots	
Storytelling – The Moroccan Oral History Project	
Digital Inclusion and Activism	
Q: What is the loss of NOT integrating doctors and dentists? A: £49 million	
Overseas qualified dentists – A different story	
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Where do we go from here?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Action points for successful integration</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>24</b>

*This is our story of integration, of how to belong; a story of what has been achieved here in London with a little bit of money, and a lot of inventiveness and passion.*

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Over the past 18 years we, the Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum, or the Forum for short, have worked with thousands of people from over 90 different countries—refugees, fleeing recent conflicts and repression, economic migrants and British people alike, many of them longstanding community leaders, and all more recently adapting to austerity measures.

Here we offer case studies demonstrating the success of our integration model. We want to share what we do, how we do it and why we do it. We want to share what we have learned so far, so that it can be used and replicated by others as a model of good practice while avoiding some of the difficulties that we have faced.

As we rarely get to hear from migrants and refugees, and as they are the ones doing most of the integrating, we include their voices too. If you are reading this report online you can also watch our brief [video testimonies](#) about integration from those who have lived it over the years.

## What is the price of integration?

Here is what we know from our experience, our evidence and some basic maths. If 3,500 migrant and refugee doctors and dentists are out of work, we all lose £49 million in income tax per year and an additional £16.8 million in National Insurance contributions per year. In other words, we are preventing dentists from helping 7 million patients who have been unable to get dental treatment from NHS dentists for more than 2 years. This is just one example of revenue loss as a result of the failure to integrate one group of skilled migrants. Think of the social or health costs, or the sheer loss of human potential caused by the failure to integrate migrants in general.

The economic argument for or against immigration has recently heated up again. Are migrants taking jobs from British people or not? The answer is inconclusive according to two different studies, one by National Institute of Economic and Social Research ([NIESR](#)) and the other by the Migration Advisory Committee ([MAC](#)). But, [the media](#) could not handle this indecisiveness and instead offered their own [interpretations](#), thus continuing the trend of a polarised migration debate. So, nothing new there, except for the fact that both reports refuted [MigrationWatch's claims](#) of epic youth unemployment caused by migration.

In the midst of this heated debate, it would be easy to miss the good news, so here it is: voices of reason and sources of credible evidence on migration are multiplying. In addition to NIESR and MAC, there are others such as [COMPAS](#) and [Migration Observatory](#) at Oxford University and [British Future](#), a new think tank set up to explore issues of identity, migration and integration, as well as an [All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration](#) set up to focus the migration debate on specific issues and assist MPs in seeking workable solutions. This new drive to have a more substantive and evidence based debate is encouraging and hopeful.

Now let us connect the dots between the £49 million of lost income tax and the integration of migrants, with the current immigration debate and the wider context of our

attempts to integrate. Let us share with you what we have learned about making integration happen in the real world, away from the headlines, the political rhetoric and the complicated bureaucracy.

## About the Forum

The Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum is a cross between a grass-roots community self-help organisation and a hub that provides support and services to numerous individuals and groups.

In short, we do everything we can to help with the challenges our members—migrants and refugees living in London—bring to us as barriers to their integration. We will work with anyone who wants to do something about integration in a constructive and positive way.

The Forum's core purpose is to provide support and share resources amongst migrant and refugee groups and individuals at different stages of their journeys to belong. Our legitimacy comes from the quality of our relationships with the people we engage with and from the intelligence we have gathered through years of interacting with diverse migrants and refugees, colleagues, partners, supporters and volunteers.

We do not claim to represent migrant and refugee communities or groups. They can and do represent themselves. But what we do know and can be representative of are the issues and challenges that we have observed and grappled with over the past 18 years together with our members and users. Better awareness is necessary to achieve positive change. And so we made the strategic decision to dedicate our resources to ensure that the voices of our users and their experiences are heard in the processes that affect all our lives, migrants and non-migrants alike.

There is a lot we have already said about integration, and it is all out there in our annual reports and strategic plans. We now want to show you how it is that we ended up knowing about 3,500 overseas qualified doctors and dentists who could be paying 49 million pounds in tax every year and why they aren't.

# Why talk about integration and why now?

## Values and Identity

Meaningful debate about integration in the context of the current migration debate is a challenge. There are many prisms through which integration can be defined and measured. Government and society want integration, in fact they demand it of its new residents. Refugees and migrants want to stay, be included, contribute and have meaningful lives. So what is the problem? Why is it that, as a country, we cannot just get on with it?

Well actually, we do get on with it, we just never recognise it as something of value or as an achievement; in other words, the glass is always half-empty. That is, if you follow the media discourse and political rhetoric.

Despite being stuck in a negative debate where immigration is always undesirable, and needs to be controlled, reduced or even stopped completely, as reported recently by the new think tank, British Future, in their [state of the nation survey](#), the majority of migrants and citizens actually get along and sharing with each other life's daily struggles.

Immigration is only ever talked about as a strain, a flood and a wave to be stopped. It is talked about as a phenomenon, because it is uncomfortable to talk about in real terms – technically speaking there is no immigration, there are only immigrants. If we are honest, it is not immigration that we do not want, it is immigrants who are poor, uneducated or too different. The euphemisms used are usually 'third country nationals' or 'non-EU migrants'. And it is even more uncomfortable to admit that there is not much we can do to stop EU migrants from migrating.

This approach and attitude towards immigrants in general, and to those who come from non-EU countries in particular, exposes our internal identity conflict, but it also exposes the challenges inherent in the political choices we make, such as our membership of the EU. We think of ourselves as an open, fair, democratic country, and as such we cannot object to people on the basis of a cultural or class background. So we talk about numbers and resources or 'their' rejection of 'our' values.

This preoccupation with who is allowed in, who stays, for how long and on what terms, is a legitimate concern for every country, but the way it is conducted has consequences for us all and it is, in our experience, the greatest barrier to integration.

Despite screaming matches about immigration in public discourse, the evidence is that Britain is a tolerant society. This is evident not only in the legislation that protects fundamental rights, but in its culture and values. British society is not forced or constrained to be fair, the majority of its citizens want to be just and equal. But integration implies inclusion of immigrants into that society, it implies belonging, acceptance, acclimatisation, participation, and sharing – a give and take that goes beyond tolerance.

## Politics and leadership

So here we are again, at the start of new cycle: we have a newish government, a new recession, new wars around the world, new cuts in the budget, new reasons to be worried about immigration and new ideas about the integration of those who are already here.

In [June 2011](#), the [Home Secretary](#) Theresa May announced:

*"a new approach to integrating our divided communities".*

The new integration policy was announced around the same time as the launch of the Prevent Review, the Government's terrorism prevention policy. Supposedly in an attempt to undo the damage done by the previous Government through linking integration to counter-terrorism, Theresa May said:

*"Prevent depends on a successful integration strategy. But integration alone will not meet our counter-terrorism objectives. And our integration programme should go much wider than just security and counter terrorism.*

*This was a fundamental failing of the last government's approach. They failed to promote integration, and where they did promote it, they did so through the narrow prism of counter-terrorism.*

*So we will do more than any government before us to promote integration – including through teaching our history and values in our schools, through National Citizen Service, and through other policies – but we will do so separately and differently from Prevent.*

*The combined effect of this work and of the new Prevent strategy will be an unyielding fight against extremism, violent extremism and radicalisation."*

This claimed 'new approach' does not inspire much confidence, but the challenge still remains for the Forum to find a way to be heard in a positive and constructive way and to contribute to the Government's integration policy.

### **An individual or group is integrated within a society when they:**

1. achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities;
2. are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and
3. have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (p.5.)

*(Indicators of Integration, Final Report, the Home Office, 2004)*

## ***Foreign Born British: Are they integrated or not?***

While we are unable to address some of these challenges concerning 'divided' communities as described above, the key questions we pose to ourselves in our daily work might be helpful in informing this debate and providing constructive solutions.

Thus, we ask ourselves: When is our work done? When is a migrant or a refugee integrated? How do we best measure integration? Who decides when a migrant or refugee is integrated?

On 20 January 2012, the [Department of Work and Pensions](#) (DWP) published a report about migrants on welfare benefits. This was a great piece of work which established the facts and put an end to fears that migrants come here to 'milk the system', that Britain is 'a soft touch' and that it is beset by 'benefit tourists'.

It was [reported](#) that out of 5.5 million people on 'out of work benefits' in the UK, 371,000 were 'foreign born' or 6.4% of the total number. 278,000 of those were non-EU migrants and 54% of them have become British Citizens (some arrived as far back as the 1970s). 29% have indefinite leave to remain and 10% have refugee status, so they are on the pathway to British citizenship too. 5% have discretionary leave to remain, while 2% are believed to be irregular immigrants. The Government worked out that, on the basis of a sample of 9,000 foreign-born people who are on benefits, there might be 180 (2%) who are foreigners and who are claiming benefits they may not be entitled to, but the Government still has to check if that is correct. The report was covered by almost every media outlet in the country.

There are many good and legitimate questions arising out of this report that were posed by reporters and commentators, such as how many of these people have worked and contributed in the past to the pot of money that they are now drawing from.

But there are some questions that have not been asked and are crucial in relation to the integration conundrum: Why did the number of 371,000 foreigners referred to by the Government include 54% of British citizens? Why are British citizens still counted as migrants if they have lived here for more than 30 years? When will they stop being migrants and become 'us'? What do migrants need to do to stop being migrants, if acquisition of citizenship is not enough of a commitment to integration?

There is no harm in knowing how many people who came here from somewhere else are now not able to work—this might be a way of understanding what barriers they are facing in terms of accessing employment and what support is needed to get them back to work. But the fact that they are now British, and have been for a long time, should mean something too. If these government statistics were presented differently, let's say with integration in mind, all foreign born British Citizens would not be part of this story because they would be 'us'. So, a more integration-focused story would read something like this:

*"Out of 127,880 non-EU migrants currently on benefits, 80,620 are permanent residents and 27,800 have full refugee status, which means that 108,420 claimants are here legiti-*

*mately and on the pathway to citizenship.*

*Out of the remaining 19,460 claimants, 13,900 have discretionary permission to stay and that allows them to claim contributory benefits legitimately and legally.*

*The government is still checking that the remaining 5,560 migrants on benefits are actually entitled to receive them. So far, the sample of 9,000 foreign born claimants shows that only 180 of them may not have been entitled to receive the benefits they were claiming, and we are now working to establish the facts about this small number of potential breaches of rules."*

So as a country we are doing pretty well both in terms of integrating migrants and making sure that our welfare system works. Migrants from outside Europe come here to work or seek protection and if they stay here legitimately, or as more than half of them did, decide to become citizens, the large majority of them, in fact 98% of them, obey the law and participate in our society in line with British law and British values.

In this example, the same information that the DWP and media outlets presented on 20 January 2012 has been presented through a lens of positive and meaningful integration.

It is not difficult to imagine what a different debate we could have on our hands, and how different the perception of immigrants would be in the UK, if we could just bring ourselves to think about integration with a little bit of confidence, with a little bit of leadership and without reference to frequently inaccurate and inflammatory headlines.

### ***Don't Believe the Hype: Media on Migration***

The damage that the media, and in particular the tabloid press, inflicts on the immigration debate and the impact it has on attitudes is well researched and documented. The Forum has made a written submission to the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press. For more information on this subject, please read [our submission](#).

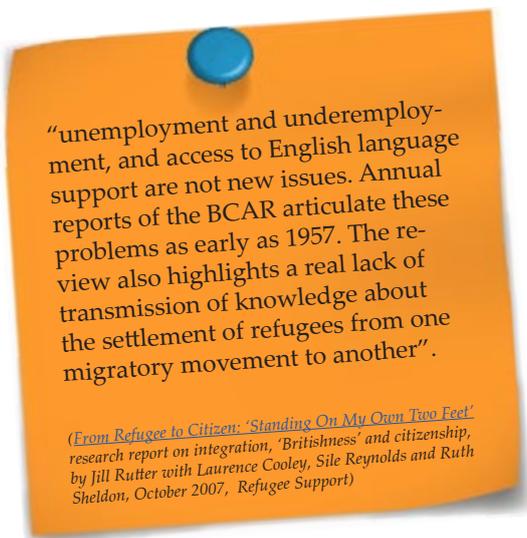
#### **In its Tenth Report on the Treatment of Asylum Seekers, the House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights in 2007 expressed the following concerns:**

*The treatment of asylum seekers by the media raises questions about whether the state is fulfilling its positive obligations to protect asylum seekers from unjustified interference with their right to respect for their dignity, private life, and physical integrity, and to secure their enjoyment of Convention rights without discrimination, consistently with the right to freedom of expression. Signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which include the UK, have specific responsibility to protect people forced by a well-founded fear of persecution to flee their countries and seek asylum (p 98).*

# Origins of Integration Policy in the UK

## History Matters: Securitising Integration

British public policy concerning the reception of migrants can be traced to the 1960s, at the end of a period of forced migration which had resulted from World War II. In the postcolonial period of the Commonwealth, Britain was actively encouraging migration.



“unemployment and underemployment, and access to English language support are not new issues. Annual reports of the BCAR articulate these problems as early as 1957. The review also highlights a real lack of transmission of knowledge about the settlement of refugees from one migratory movement to another”.

*(From Refugee to Citizen: 'Standing On My Own Two Feet' research report on integration, 'Britishness' and citizenship, by Jill Rutter with Laurence Cooley, Sile Reynolds and Ruth Sheldon, October 2007, Refugee Support)*

The [overt racism](#) and discrimination experienced by migrants focused policy on anti-discrimination measures as a way to manage community relations following the Notting Hill riots in 1958. The subsequent riots in Brixton in the 1980s and 1990s and the riots in Bradford and Oldham in 2001 maintained the public policy focus on anti-discrimination, but added community engagement and cohesion.

The term 'integration' formally entered the political vocabulary in 2000 with the launch of the first ever integration policy [Full and Equal Citizens](#), which was, somewhat short-sightedly, only concerned with the integration of recognised refugees. The policy and strategies for its implementation would have been useful if they had not been so exclusive. At the time of the launch of this strategy, only a very small number of asylum seekers were recognised as [Convention refugees](#) and only after they had waited for their claim to be decided for several years. Although asylum seekers and migrants had similar needs and could benefit from similar programmes for marginal extra costs, the government was under pressure not to be seen as helping migrants and thus encouraging more of them to come here.

At the same time as this move forward on integration, [legislation](#) was being introduced which eroded asylum seekers' basic rights. A [dispersal scheme](#) was introduced as a way to prevent concentration of migrants in large urban areas and the existing cash assistance of £35 per week per person was replaced with [supermarket vouchers](#). The Government also made a public commitment to deport higher numbers of people and introduced the [detention of children](#) as an acceptable measure to reach their deportation targets.

In 2004, the EU enlargement added ten new member states, and then two more in 2007, bringing new migrants to the UK from Central and Eastern Europe. The arrival

of EU migrants into the UK added complexity to community relations and social cohesion, particularly as receiving communities lacked information and a sufficient strategy and resources to facilitate the settlement of new residents.

The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the 7th July 2005 bombings in London, added a new dimension to strained community relations. In response to the community disturbances mentioned earlier, the government spelled out its public policy directions in [Our Shared Future](#) (2007), leaving local authorities with the job of implementing measures and delivering services to tackle poverty, social injustice and community relations.

In 2008, the Commission for Integration and Cohesion behind [Our Shared Future](#) reviewed migrant integration policy, recommending the establishment of an [Integration Agency](#) as a way of streamlining and concentrating the existing integration efforts. This suggestion was never implemented.

In the meantime, in an almost complete denial of reality, the government was continuing its integration policy aimed only at officially recognised refugees and came up with a second strategy: [Integration Matters: A national strategy for refugee integration](#). Resources were allocated to support small numbers of people with refugee status, while ignoring the needs of hundreds of thousands of migrants and the receiving communities in relation to the practical aspects of integration, and spending even more resources on criminalising and marginalising asylum seekers.

The Forum has over the years worked with the Greater London Authority and the Mayor of London and contributed to its integration strategy, [London Enriched](#), which provides a wider framework, but which lacks funds for implementation and, like the national strategy, stops short of including all migrants. The 2010 Coalition Government has so far remained true to the trend of focusing on the [prevention of terrorism](#), rather than integration. Diminishing funds brought by the recession together with increased responsibilities introduced in the new [Localism Bill](#) have left local authorities to govern through the consequences of economic recession, youth disaffection and community tensions with much less money. Local councils now have to navigate between benefit cuts, preventing radicalisation (whatever that might mean) and nudging residents towards self-reliance in [the Big Society](#).

**cohesion** is principally the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together; while

**integration** is principally the process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another.

*(Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007)*

## *Civil Society, Integration and Human Rights*

As it now stands, no category of migrants, other than the small numbers of those that were granted full refugee status, have been formally catered for by the national Government's integration policy, which includes English language classes, access to jobs, accommodation, welfare benefits, health, education and community participation.

Other categories of migrants, often the most vulnerable to exploitation, are serviced by non-governmental organisations and self-help groups working at a grassroots level. The civil society sector has thus been left to deal with the day-to-day obstacles to integration. And even this limited support is [now being severely shrunk](#) due to funding cuts for organisations, which are serving not only refugees but also asylum seekers and migrants from both EU and non-EU countries. This trend is likely to continue further given the Government's stated political stand on limiting rights for different categories of residents and tightening immigration rules.

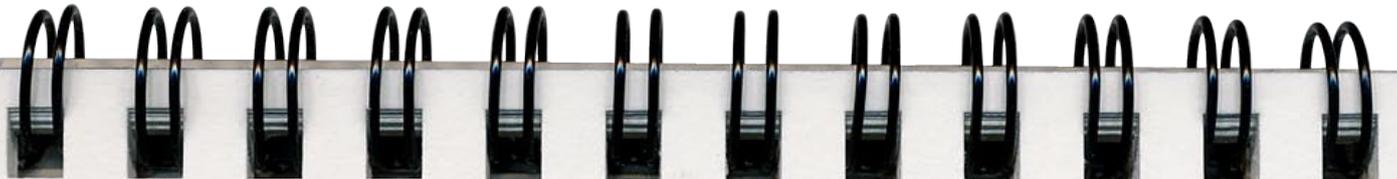
The irony here is that the Government has actually invested a huge amount of resources into the integration of all migrants through its funding of various projects and organisations that deliver integration support. And yet, in its policies and its rhetoric, it has failed to recognise the benefits and value of this work and of integration as an outcome. This failure to embrace integration openly as a process and as an outcome threatens to undermine the good work done so far and it diminishes the investment not only by charitable trusts but by various government departments and the [EU](#).

The polarisation between 'us' (citizens) and 'them' (immigrants) is exemplified in the [recent calls](#) to replace the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights in order to enable ministers to act more freely to protect British society against the perceived threat caused by foreigners' attempts to enforce compliance with their human rights. The recent [public consultation](#) on the new Bill of Rights raised many voices against the Government's move to replace the existing Human Rights Act. The most recent [speech by our PM on this issue](#) called for the restraint and refocusing of the European Court of Human Rights, and is an example of the Government's backlash against the Court's past decisions, which have constrained the Government in relation to its anti-terrorism policies.

The first concern with the proposed replacement of the existing Act is that the new Bill of Rights would likely be used as an immigration and state security instrument rather than a law enshrining rights for all per se. The second concern is over the proposal to distinguish between British citizens and non-citizens by assigning the former superior rights over the latter. Both of these changes, if implemented, would certainly mean less protection and limited access to justice for migrants and other vulnerable groups.

This is not a partisan issue, as similar restrictions in relation to immigration and the Human Rights Act were floated by the previous [administration](#).

'Them and us', 'good and bad migrants', 'contributing and non-contributing residents' — such arguments not only continue to create negative perceptions of migrants and refugees in the community, but also have an impact on long term integration and community cohesion.



*"Our data supports the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's (2007) conclusion that there is no simple relationship between high levels of diversity and poor cohesion. But we would go further and argue that, where there are high levels of historical diversity, there is likely to be a positive relationship between diversity and social cohesion. What is critical in the relationship between new immigration and social cohesion is the dominant narratives of particular places"*

*"We found that deprived communities can work internally through shared values of homogeneity or heterogeneity, but the relative capacities of these value systems have different consequences for renewal and regeneration, particularly in a period of intensive immigration. Social cohesion is challenging in areas of poverty and multiple inequalities, and improving cohesion necessitates addressing a range of issues in a continuous and integrated manner. Most of these challenges are not related to immigration. What the arrival of new immigrants can highlight, depending on the area, is either the continuing resilience within deprived communities or the existence of profound disconnections between people, groups and institutions."*

[Immigration and social cohesion in the UK: The rhythms and realities of everyday life](#),  
Mary Hickman, Helen Crowley and Nick Mai, 2008

*If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare that I am a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German and Germany will declare that I am a Jew.*

**-Albert Einstein**

Address to the French Philosophical Society at the Sorbonne, 6 April 1922

### *Integration in Europe*

Other European countries face similar issues and challenges with integration. Various methodologies have been developed to measure integration scientifically for policy purposes. For example, the Migrant Integration Policy Index ([MIPEX](#)) measures integration policies in all European Union Member States plus Norway, Switzerland, Canada, the USA, Australia and Japan. It compares countries on integration practices using 148 policy indicators in seven categories (labour market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long term residence, access to nationality and anti-discrimination) to reveal whether all residents are guaranteed equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. In short, according to its most recent data from 2010, migrants are most integrated in Sweden and Canada and least integrated in Latvia and Cyprus. The UK is somewhere in the middle, scoring very high on anti-discrimination legislation, but dropping its score since 2010 due to a more restrictive immigration policy introduced by the Coalition Government.

While the economic crisis is shifting and re-focusing the political agenda across the EU on a daily basis, there has nevertheless been recognition across Europe that integration cannot be left to chance. As a result, the work to bring some structure to integration policy and to coordinate the efforts across member states is quietly continuing. Shared experiences can help generate solutions, such as the exchange of lessons for local authorities on how to better govern complex multiracial and [multicultural urban areas](#).

### *The Forum's London-Brussels Connection*

In 2011, the Forum agreed to participate in a peer review conducted for the purpose of producing a toolkit called '[Working on Integration at Local Level](#)', by the European Network Against Racism ([ENAR](#)). We shared our integration practices and allowed them to be tested against a set of key principles that underpin a good integration model. We are pleased that what we do has been recognised as one of six models of good practice in Europe, but we are also concerned that it has not received the attention it deserves from policy makers. We mention it here because we hope you will find it useful, both in practical terms and in the context it provides on EU-wide integration policy, as many European countries and cities face similar challenges.

This process of working strategically at EU level, helped us to stop and think about how we measure what we do, but also to remind ourselves how and why we do it, and to identify areas of work that need further development and strengthening. It also helped us to contextualise our work and to share what we know with others who are in a similar position. But most importantly, it helped us realise that along with its members, the Forum is actually very good at integration and could easily do it even better if given the opportunity.

## What do migrants and refugees say about integration?

At the Forum we witness the struggle to integrate by thousands of people every year. We support them in a number of different ways, helping them to turn their struggles into victories and achievements.

In human experience, integration translates into how safe people feel in a place, whether they are able to meet their basic needs for food and shelter, and perhaps how many options they have in terms of education and employment. Integration is about whether people can live with dignity and respect, on an equal footing with other members of their community. Integration is also about adjusting to a new environment, new rules, and new codes of behaviour.

We are grateful to our members who have lived and experienced integration for sharing their experiences with us.



*I feel comfortable here because I don't feel the pressure that I feel in my country. I can be myself. My age, sexuality and gender do not matter and people accept me the way I am.*

**-Student from Japan  
came 7 years ago**

*I am improving my English, taking courses, volunteering and helping my family to settle. I have three children and they are doing well at school. That is very important for me as I am not returning to my country. It is very important to stay here and settle in.*

**-Refugee from Croatia came  
10 years ago**

*It was difficult, as we were seen differently. We had some problems with racist people knocking on windows, young kids, 'go back home' called us as 'Paki'. They were not sure where we were from.*

*Culture, that we were taught at home was different to school, my dad would emphasize that. He was very conscious in preserving our identity. He would tell us that we are Moroccan, Muslim, we have a different language.*

*By the time I was 7 I caught up and even excelled more than other kids at school in both English and Math. There are certain things you do with your friends, which you would not want your dad to know about. Because you know that he would not approve of it.*

#### **-British Moroccan**

*I felt at home when I was suffering one of the worse moments in my life, when my wife was a blink away from death. I saw solidarity and support from doctors, nurses and staff. They embraced me as part of a family. They offered me drink, sat down, talked with me, said everything is fine. That was quite different from the ones back home. If you do not have money to pay the basics, maybe you die. Human warmth and caring, it does not happen in Columbia. I've been out from the country for 20 years. You can die easily at the door of the hospital because nobody cares about you. [...] Here you feel they are warm, sincere, and caring.*

#### **-Refugee from Columbia**

*I felt integrated from the start because I went through this process in another country. The first important thing was to meet people who live here, make friends and get to know your neighbourhood.*

#### **-Student from Brazil came 2 years ago**

*I've just found a job and things are falling into place and feel more normal. I am in the process, but don't feel at home yet.*

#### **-Migrant from Spain, 18 months in UK**

*Do I feel at home? Not sure. In a way I do because my children and my husband is here. But my heart is still back in my country of birth and will always be there.*

#### **-Refugee from Former Yugoslavia, arrived 20 years ago**

*I came to London with my partner and felt isolated at the beginning. It was not until I got my first job and had British co-workers that I felt comfortable here.*

#### **-American, marriage visa came 3 years ago**

*People in that area saw us as different. I think it's because we were in council accommodation. It was a bad area, some neighbours were nice.*

*One woman let her dog chase me, we moved as quickly as possible—we were living in an area where there weren't many foreigners, so they really made my life miserable.*

*I learnt English when I arrived in the UK, I went to a few adult education classes and taught myself. I'd go around and look, and listen, I watched children's programmes and learnt English with my children, I read a lot and put in lots of effort [...] I went to university and did a degree so I mixed with British people and I volunteered a lot.*

#### **-Refugee from Lebanon came 25 years ago**

*My home family made me comfortable here in the UK and helped me improve my English. I have a group of friends. With them I can express myself and my feelings in my mother tongue.*

#### **-Migrant from Spain, came a year ago**

*I was born here but my mother was not. I always did feel uncomfortable. What helped me in the end was to make friends with others who were also from abroad because we could understand each other and the isolation was broken. That is what made the difference.*

#### **-British of a mixed origin**

*For a long time it felt like I am a tourist in London – they did not know where they were going and neither did I. Now I know where I am going and can give directions to others. London is home for me.*

#### **-British from Sussex, came to London 4 years ago**

*I am an intern. I live in a house with four British people and I feel uncomfortable. What would make a difference is to have friends – sharing with people and talking to them, to feel accepted.*

#### **-Student from Italy came 2 months ago**

*First I came as a student, then became a highly skilled migrant and now I am married to a British citizen and applying for British citizenship. I feel comfortable here because of my family. I want to live and contribute to the society in which my children are growing up.*

#### **-Migrant from Canada, came 10 years ago**

*What made me feel at home was when I got a job in the UK, that made me feel that I was contributing to society.*

#### **-Highly skilled migrant from Mexico, came 3 years ago**

*Although English is an official language in my country, when I came I could not understand what people told me and people could not understand me. This left a huge impression on me and I retained this memory.*

#### **-Migrant from Nigeria, arrived as a child 35 years ago**

*I still miss my family. Every time I go home, I feel that I should be here (Japan), but if I think of all the circumstances, UK is certainly better: the work ethics and because I am a single parent. In Japan, that kind of matter is really conservative. They don't accept single parents. People treat you as if something is wrong with you. [...] I'm pretty open about it with my friends.*

#### **-Migrant from Japan**

## The Forum's Model of Integration – The Story So Far

The Forum approaches inclusion and integration from the perspective of migrants and refugees. This is our mission, this is what we were set up to do.

Our measure of integration is the extent to which migrants feel that they are a part of shared society, and our ultimate aim is to assist them to reach a point where they no longer need support from us. This does not mean that when they no longer need our services they will be fully integrated into British society. It just means that they will be capable enough to move further down this path by themselves. Our guiding principle is that we work to make ourselves redundant. Our aim is not to create dependency, but to create a safe space where we can nurture individuals and then let them go.

We often refer to our work jokingly as 'tough love', simply to remind ourselves that we must be mindful not to create a dependency, especially when we support vulnerable individuals. Dependency encourages isolation and it is an impediment to a wider social change. Because as long as the Forum is meeting the needs of migrants and refugees, it means that someone somewhere in the system is not doing their job, and more importantly, that they are not even aware of the issues facing parts of the British population. The Forum's approach is to help change mainstream services by helping migrants and refugees to interact with them independently.

The 'love' part of our 'tough love' is reflected in our commitment to treat all migrants and refugees with respect, and to create a safe space for them to interact with others respectfully. We listen and try to find practical solutions for their problems. That requires a level of flexibility to respond to their needs, as well as a willingness to continually develop, adapt and innovate. Which is why we are able to facilitate such a wide variety of activities and services at the Forum.

The Forum is a place where people with different origins, cultures, languages and migration experiences (as well as those who are not necessarily identifiable as migrants, such as the children of migrants) can work with each other to achieve common goals, be it access to legal advice or petitioning policymakers, holding cultural events or running supplementary schools, fighting deportation or starting a charity, writing a blog on an issue of common concern or studying for a professional verification exam.

### **The underlying purpose of all these activities is meaningful integration into British society.**

We believe that if people are given a helping hand at the beginning of their journey as citizens of this country, they will make a positive contribution. Their immigration status, although important for them and their sense of safety, should not be stopping them from learning English, finding a job and contributing to society.

We are also aware of our limitations and that we cannot meet all their needs. Further, there is no need for us to do *everything*, as there are numerous other organisations and public services which have the expertise and capacity to provide all kinds of support for migrants and refugees, so our capacity to sign post and refer is of vital importance for integration too.

I arrived in the UK in 2008 and it was as if I had landed in a wilderness with nowhere to turn. I went to visit the Forum and was so amazed at the cordial manner in which I was received. I was shown round the whole facility like a VIP. They have been instrumental in helping me pass the Overseas Registration Exam to enable me to work as a dentist in the UK.

**Benjamin**  
Member of the Forum's  
Overseas Dentist Journal Club



## Working Together – Better for Less

Every year the Forum works with around 100 organisations. These include migrant and refugee community organisations, other forums and networks such as the [Migrants Rights Network](#), civil society organisations such as [Citizens UK](#), large regional and national voluntary sector organisations such as [MIND](#), [ILPA](#), [LVSC](#), local voluntary service councils, various local government departments, police and NHS Trusts across London, GPs and schools, campaigning and advocacy groups such as [Liberty](#) and [The Fawcett Society](#), specialist providers such as CAB's and Law Centres and many of our fellow migrant and refugee support organisations.

We also work with trusts that fund some of our work such as Trust for London, City Bridge Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. In the past we have worked with the British Medical Association (BMA) (on a programme to support overseas qualified doctors, many of whom were refugees, to re-qualify so that they could practise medicine in Britain) and the British Library (on a programme to collect 100 life stories from three generations of Moroccans who have settled in Britain). The nature and the level of our interaction with each organisation will depend on the issue and our capacity to deliver support by way of a strategic partnership.

### What worked well?

Working in partnership is an enriching experience which adds value to a shared effort for positive change, while helping to avoid duplication. Clear terms of reference and transparency around our agenda, values and self-interest has always worked for us. Building long term relationships of trust is the key. Willingness to share resources, knowledge and expertise helps with integration too.

### The challenges we've faced

At times, it has been difficult for us to match the capacity of our large partners and some of them have had difficulty influencing their internal processes, especially if the partner is more hierarchical in structure (for example, public sector organisations). In some partnerships there is a lack of clarity around ownership of outcomes and this needs to be addressed up front to avoid misunderstandings and to manage expectations.



*Some people lose out on things in the UK because they do not know, because they do not have anyone to help them. That made me think about learning to be a solicitor one day and helping people. This is what I want to do. I've been a victim of not knowing what to do and not knowing my rights.*

**Papy**  
Graduate of the Forum's  
Digital Activism Course



## Mentoring for Integration

Meeting immediate need in a timely and appropriate fashion is crucial, not only because it helps those concerned, but also because it often saves money further down the road. Such is the case for timely good quality advice which helps prevent litigation, homelessness and debt.

We also recognise that migrants and refugees want to work, educate themselves and their children and have opportunities to interact with other citizens. In response to those needs on an individual level, we have developed a number of [mentoring initiatives](#) that provide structured interaction between [migrants and refugees and other citizens who wish to volunteer](#) their time and expertise and good will to help migrants and refugees [feel welcome and adapt to life in London](#).

In addition to one-to-one mentoring relationships, both mentors and mentees take part in joint workshops such as [English PEN writing workshops](#) or [drama workshops](#) which help them to [develop new skills, confidence and friendships](#).

The benefit of all these interactions is not only in helping individuals out of isolation, it also helps vulnerable migrants regain self-respect that is eroded through harsh treatment by the authorities or the trauma refugees often experience as they flee persecution. Furthermore it provides a way for migrant and non-migrant residents who want to support the integration of others to get involved. Over the years our mentoring project has benefited from the input of hundreds of volunteer mentors who come from all walks of life and want to contribute to the integration of new citizens. The interest and commitment of Londoners to this kind of volunteering is growing, and if we had capacity we could facilitate volunteering and mentoring for hundreds more people. For the Forum, this direct interaction is a priceless barometer of the positive public opinion and attitudes that exists in London.

## Influencing Policy from the Grassroots

Our approach is holistic: even when we meet the immediate needs of one individual, such as providing immigration advice, we also seek to gauge their additional needs and refer them to our other projects or external agencies for further advice. Our ESOL classes, mentoring, volunteering, advocacy, employment or campaigning training, are all aimed at expanding their social networks and interactions and thus offering opportunities and increasing possibilities for self-sufficiency.

In order to influence public policy we gather evidence of systemic failure to include migrants and refugees into institutional provision and then advocate for change to policy, services and attitudes. In the process, we work with our partners to share and communicate the reality and challenges of integration. To state agencies, elected officials and policy makers, we offer evidence-based creative solutions for better integration.

We contributed to the work of the [Independent Asylum Commission](#) and have been negotiating with the UKBA ever since to implement its recommendations on how to make the asylum system more efficient and humane. Together with many others we have achieved significant [improvements to Lunar House](#), where migrants report to resolve their status. Also, our [2010 campaign against a proposed compulsory voluntary service](#) for migrants as a step towards settlement helped efforts to have the unworkable proposal dropped.

Policy work—or helping migrants and refugees to have a say in the democratic processes that affect their lives—is our toughest challenge. For the Forum it is common sense, and indeed a civic responsibility, that when we identify barriers to integration that are unfair, unjust or simply a waste of time and money, that we need to work on a more strategic level to remove the barriers and help build a better society for all. But the obstacles we face in our attempts to influence opinion formers are similar to those that migrants and refugees experience in their efforts to belong.

It seems that no one can remember the time, if indeed there ever was one, when we were not afraid of immigrants, and indeed we share this fear with many other countries. This fear is a source of perpetual cognitive dissonance in debate, policy making and day-to-day experience of life in multi-dimensional societies. This fear is based on perceptions of who migrants are, and how many of them are here, often distorted through misrepresentation of numbers and the perceived strain migrants place on society's resources. The debate about immigration very quickly gets dislocated into the debate about jobs, housing, policing and anti-terrorism, and integration is seen as the last resort for those who will not leave or cannot be repatriated.

There are a number of conflicting positions that need to be negotiated for integration to work, not least of all that the acceptance of those who are lawful residents and not

just in transition needs to be reconciled with fears that they will somehow damage our equilibrium. We must also recognise that newcomers have needs and that it is legitimate for them to ask for help to meet those needs, even though we might be struggling to meet our own.

Over the years the Forum has done a number of different things to help inform the debate. We have produced research reports, fact sheets, and campaigned together with others making small dents into the overwhelming negativity surrounding migration. We have worked with the media and managed to develop good working relationships and offer some alternative perspectives on the impact of immigration. Over the years we have also learned that the best use of our resources is to get the authentic voices of migrants and refugees into the debate. This does not yet mean they will be heard and listened to, but at least they are out there, telling their side of the story for those fair minded people who want to hear them.

The final challenge is to get many more migrants and refugees talking. They have a lot to say and their stories of survival are inspiring and humbling. But the majority feel intimidated by the debate as it is at the moment and do not wish to take part as they are aware that they are blamed for all sorts of social problems. This is a huge indictment on a country that places such importance on freedom of speech. The challenge for all of us here, but for the media and the Government in particular, is to start a new conversation and allow for a reasonable debate to take place where migrants and refugees can have a say, or in the very least, would not be afraid to have a say.





## Storytelling – The Moroccan Oral History Project

The most comprehensive storytelling exercise the Forum has engaged in is the oral history project [Moroccan Memories in Britain](#), through which we helped tell the story of more than a hundred migrants and their experiences of settling in the UK. It took us almost two years to consult with our members, find the funds and build the relationships to mainstream the project. We were able to make the case that Moroccan immigrants are now British too and that their experience of settling here over three generations is part of British heritage. The Heritage Lottery Fund provided funding and the British Library Oral History Archive agreed to store the testimonies for posterity. We also produced the documentary *Masaarat (Journeys)*, bringing to life some of the testimonies. And we wrote an [educational resource pack](#) for Key stage 3 Citizenship Lessons which is available online but which was also printed and sent to 1,500 schools across the country in order to introduce the experience of British Moroccans as both distinctive and typical for British society. It presents these perspectives explicitly in terms of citizenship and ties into other KS3 subjects, including History, Geography, PSHE, English and Music.

The project also raised funds from Morocco to take an Oral History Exhibition around the UK and to Morocco. We produced a music CD and organised a two day academic conference on Moroccan Migration with Sussex University. Over a two-year period, we employed and trained more than 20 bilingual field

workers who conducted and transcribed interviews. In many cases, these were young people from the community who had just graduated and this was their first job.

The process of gathering testimonies involved engagement with communities around the country which was also an opportunity for other institutions such as schools and the police to engage with, and gain a better understanding of, British Moroccans. Through this project a safe space was created for all to have a discussion about what needs to happen for better inclusion and integration. At the conclusion of the project, a new legacy organisation called the Moroccan Foundation was established and the project coordinator went on to write a [Community Study](#) for Runnymede Trust which was launched at an event in the House of Commons.

Over a period of two years this relatively small project engaged several thousand Moroccans as well as their British neighbours and friends and created a huge volume of information for all kinds of audiences. It made a community visible, but in a safe way, in their own words and on their own terms. More importantly, it provided the space and framework for the migrant community and wider community to have a productive conversation about their identities and helped establish relationships of trust and understanding.

## Digital Inclusion and Activism

The word 'digital' has a tendency to scare some people, and migrants are no exception. However, regardless of our fears, we all recognise that we live in the digital age and we do not have a great deal of choice about it. The Internet has transformed our way of life and social networking took the changes a step further. Suspecting new forms of exclusion, we decided to explore how to use digital tools for the benefit of our members and integration in general.

In 2008 the Government published its [Digital Inclusion Strategy](#) and after reading it we realised that our migrant and refugee communities might be left behind as a new digital underclass emerges. It turns out that this is a concern which the current Government shares. [Race Online 2012](#), a Government funded campaign to get us all online, states that 4 million of the UK's 8.4 million adults who have never been online are also socially and economically excluded. This means that those who need access to services the most are the least likely to be able to access them, given that the Government intends to make many public services digital by default.

We were also interested in finding out why community leaders were not using the Internet more to get their voices heard in the public debate. It was strange that many of them used the Internet and mobile phones in their efforts to advance democracy in their home countries, but in Britain they fell silent.

So we asked our members what was preventing them from speaking out online and whether they and their communities felt ready to use the internet to access their children's school records, pay bills online or book a hospital appointment. It was not surprising to learn that many found equipment and Internet connections expensive and struggled to find good quality training. Our members also told us that they are, like most people, a bit apprehensive about social networking, but in relation to speaking out, they all felt silenced by the deafening nega-

tive discourse on migration all around them. Some even felt that it might be unsafe to draw attention to the fact that they are migrants and refugees, out of fear of racist attacks. They felt completely silenced as immigrants, regardless of how long they had lived in the UK and what their socio-economic, or indeed immigration, status was.

We felt that the new digital age is an opportunity that should not be missed, so we developed a [7-week course on Digital Inclusion and Activism Training](#). We received funding from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission which paid for a Trainer, and over the last 18 months we have delivered training for more than 80 community workers on a huge range of topics, from how to find your MP and use Hansard online to posting messages on Facebook, from creating a blog to providing feedback to the NHS online.

The achievements of our participants include the creation of 74 new blogs which represent a significant increase in how migrants and refugees represent themselves online. By the end of the course, trainees increased their amount of time spent online per day by at least one hour. We know our participants have gained digital skills because before and after surveys, as well as in-depth interviews, reveal that their skills and confidence shoot up after the course. For computer skills it increases from 78% to 87%. For Internet skills like using a social network, it increases on average from 45% to 91%.

We know that the Digital Inclusion and Activism Training is overcoming barriers because before the course participants said their biggest barrier was that they didn't know how to do something and they were concerned with privacy. After the course, their biggest barrier was that they didn't have enough time. This shift away from fear and concern with privacy shows how the course overcame this as a barrier.

We also know that these digital skills are lasting and trickle down to other learners and communities. Many of our graduates report back about teaching friends and family about what they have learned.



*Creating a blog was immensely motivating and inspirational. I shall take it with me and utilise it forever!*

**Graduate of the Forum's Digital Activism Course**

## Q: What is the loss of NOT integrating doctors and dentists? A: £49 million

In 2001 the Forum provided Bilingual Health Advocacy training for migrants and refugees to work as [cultural brokers](#) in health settings. The idea was that cultural brokers make highly effective health advocates because they understand their community's needs, habits, faith and customs and because health advocates already have their client's trust, they can link them more effectively to mainstream health professionals

Through networks established via this training, a small group of doctors, who were also refugees, came to the Forum to ask if they could use [our meeting rooms](#) to prepare for their qualification verification exams ([ILETS](#) and [PLAB](#)). They started meeting on a weekly basis, as and if meeting rooms were available. We learned from them that the exams were difficult to prepare for and they had no structured support. We also learned that the exams were prohibitively expensive and that many of them were unable to work while studying.

The Equality and Diversity officer at the Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority had a close working relationship with the Forum and helped us with a small grant of £5,000 to assist the doctors in paying for their exams. He also put us in touch with the NHS Workforce Federation. The Forum formed a grants panel which involved refugee doctors and representatives of the health authority to distribute the grants.

During the first year, and entirely through word of mouth, more and more refugee doctors found out about the project and came to the Forum. In addition to finding small grants, we recruited a retired GP who volunteered to provide structured training to the doctors once a week at our Centre.

The Forum also secured funding from the Learning and Skills Council, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Primary Care Trust, to employ a Project Coordinator who, through outreach and partnership working, expanded the reach of the project amongst refugee doctors and potential partners such as the British Medical

Association, the General Medical Council, the Department of Health, other support agencies, NHS Employers and many others.

The aim of the healthcare professionals project was to help doctors with valuable experience to get back to work and help with shortages of skilled professionals in the NHS, thus benefiting wider society. It was also about giving them back their professional identity and their vocation in life.

Further funding was secured from the European Social Fund and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to extend the support to overseas qualified dentists. Two more members of staff were employed to help deliver information and employment advice as well as to coordinate training for both doctors and dentists. Working in partnership with similar projects, while delivering support to hundreds of doctors and dentists, the Forum helped mainstream the training of more than 500 overseas qualified doctors so that they could be advised and supported through their professional associations and the NHS in order to prepare for verification exams and then to find jobs.

In 2008, the Refugee Doctors support scheme at the Forum came to an end as there was enough mainstream support for them. This programme was a real success story for us. We achieved our ultimate goal of making ourselves redundant. Some doctors continued to come to our Centre for additional support and a smaller weekly study group continued to meet until the summer of 2011. They also sought support in other areas of concern for refugees and migrants, such as immigration and welfare.

While studying for their exams, many doctors also took part in a mentoring programme and as bilingual mentors provided support for other vulnerable refugees and migrants who did not speak English and who were experiencing mental health problems. Volunteering as mentors gave refugee and migrant doctors an opportunity to give back to the community, and because they had medical backgrounds, they were more confident in dealing with vulnerable refugees who were not able to access other support.

The responsiveness of professional bodies and public institutions such as Health Authorities worked well in this case for the integration of highly skilled professionals, and directly benefited the wider public. The inclusive culture of the NHS, with its large diverse workforce, helped mainstream support for all future overseas qualified medical professionals who needed help. The Forum acted as a conduit and a hub and was able to meet the need and close gaps while larger mainstream institutions were implementing the necessary changes.

Of course there were barriers to getting refugee doctors into work, such as the need to do long periods of unpaid work experience, insecure immigration status and a lack of documentation for those who'd had to flee their homelands, but overall, the institutional response was positive and most professionals in the public sector recognised the benefits in providing support to doctors' efforts to pass the requisite qualification verification exams and start working.





## Overseas qualified dentists – A different story

Encouraged by the success of the economic integration of doctors, the Forum replicated this training support model for verification exams to provide support to overseas qualified dentists. Our weekly lectures delivered by committed lecturers from dentistry faculties were oversubscribed. As dentists could not find clinical attachments, we purchased special equipment which allowed them to practice drilling so as not to lose dexterity while they were out of work. We have a substantial medical library so that doctors and dentists were able to borrow books that were typically prohibitively expensive. The Forum also acquired additional equipment that was needed for first aid training.

Between 2004 and 2009, while delivering training, employment advice and other support to migrant and refugee dentists, we worked with mainstream professional bodies, but the pathway in dentistry is slightly different to that for doctors as the NHS does not play the same role. We learned that this is because dentists are contracted to provide NHS services in a different way from doctors.

The second barrier to dentists' integration was a lack of clarity around their immigration status and what this entitled them to in terms of training support. Although the Department of Health went on an [overseas recruitment drive](#) to bring in qualified dentists, [NHS Employers](#) only had the remit to provide support for refugee dentists already in the UK. This presented a problem for the Forum as we had large numbers of migrant dentists in need of support to be able to work in Britain and only a very small number of refugee dentists. We have never received a formal explanation as to why we were prevented from having migrant dentists attend the same lectures as refugee dentists.

The Forum continued to provide online support for migrant and refugee dentists with no funding for a further two years at a loss of £30,000 per year. At the end of 2011 the project had 3,500 overseas qualified dentists registered for our online self-help study group. As the Forum was no longer able to provide staff time to coordinate and administer the online support, a new self-help website Dentist StudyBuddy ([link](#)) was designed and a membership fee is used to cover the cost of administration. So far nearly 300 dentists have registered with this new initiative.



## Lessons Learned

Listening to what migrants need is the best method for identifying solutions. In the case of doctors and dentists, the Forum provided a space for these professionals to come together and share knowledge and information with a view to qualifying to work in the UK. The Forum had the requisite networks and the capacity to advocate for pragmatic solutions for integration—training support for professional verification exams. When all other doors were closed, we opened our Resource Centre to migrants as well as refugees and asylum seekers. The external environment was also mostly positive. Doctors and dentists are perceived as ‘good’, ‘desirable’ and ‘contributing’ refugees and migrants and as such are not seen as a threat to society. Although things were difficult for many of them individually, the statutory sector, professional bodies, the media and the public all responded to them positively.

Arbitrary discrimination by statutory funders between professionals with different immigration status was unhelpful and unnecessary because all of them are in the UK legally with long term settlement immigration statuses. Indeed, it created resentment and an artificial divide between professional colleagues who had the same needs and could help each other to overcome barriers to integration. And it was a waste of public funds.

The public benefit of getting hundreds of bilingual and often very experienced doctors and dentists into work is self-evident. In 2008 it was [reported that 7 million people could not find a NHS dentist in the UK](#) for more than two years.

What is not so evident is the loss that society has suffered because these professionals were not working. So here is the simple maths bit. If we assume that an average salary of a dentist is £60,000 (some earn more) on which each would pay £14,000 of Income tax per year, in crudest monetary terms the loss to HMRC that occurred because 3,500 dentists (or doctors) did not work for a year amounts to £49 million. This is in addition to £16.8 million they would have paid in National Insurance Contributions per year (£4,800 each per year).

The cost of running and coordinating training projects at the Forum is £80,000 per year and this includes employing a coordinator and paying the trainers as well as books, room hire and all other overhead costs. Dentists bear the cost of exams fees which is more than £2,000 per exam.

When we ran out of funding for this project, we approached all local Primary Care Trusts in London. We wrote to Chief Executives, people responsible for Dental



## Development of Organisations Delivering Integration

In our 18-year experience, self-help has been one of the key resources for integration. Indeed, that is how and why the Forum came into existence. In the early 1990s, settled economic migrants as well newly arrived refugees in northwest London, struggled in their attempts to access health and welfare services, employment and education, legal advice and housing. They formed community organisations to share their knowledge, skills and support each other, but this presented them with additional challenges of meeting the requirements of British charitable law and working within a competitive voluntary sector. A number of visionary community leaders (Angolan, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Filipino, Kurdish, Moroccan, Somali, Sudanese, Ugandan, Vietnamese and others) approached service providers from the statutory and voluntary sector and expressed their concerns about the lack of infrastructure and development support.

In the true spirit of partnership and self-help, diverse communities overcame their differences and joined forces in order to empower themselves. As a result, community leaders established the Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum, a shared resource for their on-the-ground work with specific communities to solve their own problems and reach their own aspirations. It was conceived and it still is governed by representatives of migrant and refugee communities and still proudly serves and represents these communities' interests with users involved not only in governance, but in planning, policy work and the delivery of support to all migrants and refugees.

These leaders fundraised for and set up a Resource Centre in vibrant North Kensington to create a place for communities to work together and support each other.

Although community groups tend to work with one distinct group of migrants and refugees (often because of a language barrier), with the Forum's support many have made huge progress in developing partnerships and sharing knowledge and resources amongst each other and with other agencies. This process of partnership brokerage is demanding in terms of time and resources, requiring independent space and guidance.

The Forum's approach clearly directs migrant organisations outwards from the concerns expressed within their communities to fuller engagement with other groups within civil society and towards policy makers and politicians making key decisions.

Thankfully, despite the lack of resources, many migrant and refugee community organisations are resilient and are adapting to new circumstances. They are developing their capacity to take part in local commissioning processes, for example, and work together better.

The concern is that the pace of change is so fast and overwhelming that the good work done by community organisations, their expertise and the community networks established over the years will be lost and it will take years and additional investment to restart the process of engagement.

Care and those responsible for Equality and Diversity. We asked each Trust to contribute between £3,000 and £5,000 to the training scheme based on the number of migrant dentists living their borough. The Forum had developed a comprehensive registration database so we had the detailed demographics data that helped us produce this information quickly. The two trusts that had already been involved in the doctors project (KC and Westminster) told us they had no further means to support this work as it was no longer seen as their priority. The remaining 31 Trusts did not even acknowledge our letters.

The Forum continued to register new overseas qualified dentists and to provide basic support despite the burden it created on our resources. We felt a responsibility to continue to meet the needs of highly skilled migrants in line with our mission and values and we are still hopeful that we can make a difference on a more strategic level, preventing the waste of an enormous investment. There is still a strong case for the integration of refugee and migrant dentists, and sooner rather than later. We hope that our case for the frontloading of support will be recognised as a way forward by the government and professional bodies.



## Where do we go from here?

As the draft of the new integration policy is circulating amongst government departments, let's imagine an integration policy that could really work in shaping productive and active UK citizens: one rooted in the protection of human rights for all and understood as a two-way process in which mutual adjustments are made by all parties so as to be able to work for a more equal and just society and the common good.

A policy where the state is a constructive and engaged partner in encouraging self-reliance, rather than creating exclusion and neglect. A policy that recognises the contribution that migrants make to society and the economy. A policy that is underpinned by the adequate provision of language classes and other pathways towards employment and community participation.

A policy in which the schooling of migrant and minority children would be well thought through to meet their needs. Where political leaders would demonstrate wisdom and guidance to encourage diversity and interaction, where the press would cease to vilify migrants, or otherwise be penalised for inaccurate reporting and negative labelling. A policy in which migrant communities would no longer be viewed as homogenous lumps of 'others' represented by unelected community leaders, but as a repository of individuals with potential and a right 'to be' whatever they liked without being assigned an identity.

In short, a policy which, in a few years, may generate a real sense of belonging among numerous active citizens and therefore a more productive and happier society.

**OPERATION  
INTEGRATION:**

*We know it can be done because we, and thousands of others, have been doing it for years. It has been analysed and measured, reported and researched, defined and tested, now it is time to stop talking and just get on with it. It is time to ensure that we do not waste another year in which we will all miss out on £49 million in income tax.*

## Action points for successful integration

1. Ask migrants and refugees about the barriers to integration - these vary but they have told that at the top are: a) Immigration status resolved quickly b) Family life – people feel at home and that they belong when they are surrounded by their loved ones c) Access to education – language and otherwise and d) Employment – access to jobs and protection of rights.

2. Involve migrants and refugees in the design and delivery of solutions - it is useful to look at models and experiences in other countries, but also in the UK where there is knowledge and experience amongst community and voluntary groups to help deliver the best integration practice that matches need.

3. Inform and involve local communities and local authorities– if integration is to happen there needs to be someone on the other end of migrants integrating. Formulate integration outcomes into meaningful practices that all local services can use as a measure of their own efforts to integrate new citizens.

4. Change the conversation about immigration and integration – admit mistakes, look for the positive, but also own up to successes and stand up to inaccurate and biased media.

5. Protect the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees and treat them like everyone else.

6. Invest resources for the integration of all migrants regardless of their origin or immigration status.

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