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**Migration Policy Scotland Project:  
Report of a scoping exercise on the need for greater  
policy capacity on migration in Scotland**

Author: Sarah Kyambi  
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Sarah Kyambi, 28 February 2020

The Migration Policy Scotland Project website: <http://www.migrationpolicyscotland.org.uk/>

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# Migration Policy Scotland Project: Report of a scoping exercise on the need for greater policy capacity on migration in Scotland

This is the report of a scoping exercise carried out in Scotland throughout 2019 investigating the need for greater policy capacity on migration. The scoping work was undertaken by Dr Sarah Kyambi, an independent immigration policy expert based in Edinburgh. The resulting report draws on her expertise on migration and immigration policy and her experience of the policy landscape in Scotland. She currently works on UK immigration policy with a strong focus on Scotland. Every effort has been made to conduct a thorough, well-rounded, scoping exercise that takes into account a wide range of views and presents a balanced view of the options for building migration policy capacity in Scotland.

## Context

Under the Scotland Act 1998 Immigration is a reserved matter, meaning the power to legislate on immigration matters resides solely at Westminster. Despite this reservation, commentators point out longstanding divergence in practice between Scotland and the rest of the UK on matters pertaining to migration. This is particularly evident in the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers,<sup>1</sup> but also discernible in relation to aspects of the 'hostile environment' where Scotland does not implement immigration checks relating to renting for instance. There has also emerged a clear contrast in the political rhetoric on immigration between the Scottish Government and the UK Government, with the Scottish Government remaining markedly more positive on immigration. The positive politics on migration in Scotland extends beyond the Scottish government and at times amounts to a cross party consensus. The reasons underpinning this positive approach on Scotland are much debated and the prospects for its continuance are unclear.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, this difference on the desired direction of travel on migration has become ever more apparent since the 2016 Brexit vote and looks set stay that way for some time to come. Most recently, it has been apparent in proposals put forward by the Scottish Government on migration that include an additional entry route to allow Scotland to access to a wider range of migrants.<sup>3</sup>

The migrant population of Scotland numbered 469,000<sup>4</sup> in 2018, with overseas net migration at 10,900 (2017-18). The cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh have the largest migrant populations and see the highest net migration. Of these migrants, only a very small proportion are refugees and asylum seekers - migrants seeking protection under the refugee convention or from human rights abuses. In 2004 the total number of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland was estimated to be 10,000, living mainly in

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Mulvey, G. (2018). Social Citizenship, Social Policy and Refugee Integration: A Case of Policy Divergence in Scotland? *Journal of Social Policy*, 47(1), 161-178. doi:10.1017/S0047279417000253

<sup>2</sup> See further Hepburn E., Rosie M. (2014) Immigration, Nationalism, and Politics in Scotland. In: Hepburn E., Zapata-Barrero R. (eds) *The Politics of Immigration in Multi-Level States*. Palgrave Politics of Identity and Citizenship Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137358530\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137358530_12)

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2020) Migration: Helping Scotland prosper, available: <https://www.gov.scot/news/plan-for-scottish-visa/>. See further: Kyambi, S. (2020) Migration: How Scotland hoped to do things differently, LSE Brexit, available here: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2020/02/21/migration-how-scotland-hoped-to-do-things-differently/> and Kyambi, S (2018) Post-Brexit Immigration Policy: Scotland wants to go its own way, LSE Brexit, available here: (<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/06/22/post-brexit-immigration-policy-scotland-wants-to-go-its-own-way/>)

<sup>4</sup> APS and LFS data foreign born residents. <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/local-area-migration>

Glasgow.<sup>5</sup> This number will have continued to rise with ongoing asylum seeker dispersal to Glasgow and refugee resettlement schemes bringing refugees into local authorities across the whole of Scotland. However, the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland remains small in comparison to the overall migrant population. Despite this, the vast majority of the infrastructure relating to migration in Scotland is linked to asylum and refugee migration. Much of this is located in Glasgow and has developed in conjunction with that city's role as the country's main asylum dispersal location since the 1990s.

Outside of asylum and refugee migration, the discussion relating to immigration policy in Scotland usually co-ordinated by the Scottish Government or the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities Strategic Migration Partnership (Cosla SMP). Both have been involved in gathering evidence for the Migration Advisory Committee's Scotland Shortage Occupation List, and, have assisted with or fed into recent consultations on post-Brexit immigration policy. At times, other sector-specific stakeholders engage more directly on aspects of immigration policy affecting their membership (e.g.: Universities Scotland on proposals for students). Following the 2016 Brexit vote, concerns about the end of free movement have led to projects across Scotland being developed to provide information and support to EEA nationals living in Scotland.

Engagement with central government and the Migration Advisory Committee has ramped up since the Brexit vote with the Scottish Government emerging as the key reference partner in Scotland. Civil service capacity on migration in Scotland has seen an increase with the establishment of a Migration and Population Team, reporting to the newly created post of Scottish Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development<sup>6</sup> (among others). The ongoing need for expertise and analysis on migration on the part of the Scottish Government also led to the commissioning of an Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population that brings together academic expertise across universities in Scotland led by Prof Christina Boswell.<sup>7</sup> The focus on population confirms that this remains a key driver of the Scottish Government's interest in migration, reflecting the higher rate of population ageing and the risk of population decline in Scotland. These demographic concerns predate the SNP administration, acting as an impetus for the Scotland-specific Fresh Talent Initiative under the Labour-Liberal Democrat administration in 2004.

Outside of local and regional government there is no organisation in Scotland that works primarily on immigration in Scotland (apart from refugees and asylum). Nor is there an organisation that seeks to represent the views of migrants in Scotland. Efforts to influence the development of immigration law and policy from a Scottish perspective are sporadic, usually focused on specific issues and project based. There have been efforts to develop networks to better co-ordinate work on migration issues in Scotland and provide a platform in the form of Migrants Rights Scotland and the Scottish Migrants Network. However, these are currently disbanded, mainly due to a lack of funds. Third sector organisations that seek to influence immigration policy or organise migrant communities at UK-level have little foothold in Scotland. They are thereby limited in their ability to feed in views informed by the Scottish context, engage with stakeholders in Scotland or to explore the influencing opportunities that working within the more positive context in Scotland could offer.

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170401194751/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2004/03/19169/35275>

<sup>6</sup> Now the Minister for Public Finance and Migration

<sup>7</sup> Inaugural Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Population and Migration (Feb 2019) 'UK immigration policy after leaving the EU: impacts on Scotland's economy, population and society,' available: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/uk-immigration-policy-leaving-eu-impacts-scotlands-economy-population-society/>

## Methodology

This scoping exercise was conducted as a series of conversations that explored:

1. What migration policy work is currently being undertaken in Scotland and what would be needed or viewed as useful?
2. What kinds of policy work should greater capacity on migration pursue?
3. What challenges arise and what opportunities would increased policy capacity in this area bring?
4. How and where would migration policy work be best be undertaken given the existing landscape of organisations in Scotland?

Existing networks and online research were used to identify conversation partners with particular attention on contacting organisations across the whole of Scotland. A flyer was sent out to 109 organisations looking for conversation partners.<sup>8</sup> This flyer was also sent to 15 academics at universities in Scotland whose research interests include migration. It was further circulated through five relevant academic and practitioner networks.<sup>9</sup>

At the core of the scoping work are 32 conversations with a diverse range of partners (including one outside Scotland). These conversations were of varying length with some covering all the questions outlined above, while others restricted themselves to those questions a given conversation partner could respond to. All conversation partners were given the opportunity to feed in any views that they had been not been specifically asked about. Care was taken to include people working in organisations representing different groups of stakeholders including: the Scottish government, local government, business, trades unions, mainstream third sector organisations, migration-focused third sector organisations, regional equalities councils, race equality organisations and human rights organisations.<sup>10</sup> The scoping exercise was, however, not able to secure input from the full range of stakeholder groups. Input from the Scottish Parliament was gathered via a conversation with a single conversation partner who then facilitated gathering input from colleagues by email. The conversation partners included six Members of Parliament (MPs) for constituencies in Scotland. Efforts was made to secure interviews with MPs for all the main political parties in Scotland, but this again proved not possible.

The scoping exercise also tracked down conversation partners involved in setting up and leading the now defunct efforts to network and organise migration-related work in Scotland: the Scottish Migrants Network and Migrants Rights Scotland. This allowed the scoping exercise to get an internal perspective on these experiences.<sup>11</sup> These conversations covered the benefits of what those networks/organisations had achieved, the drawbacks and challenges they faced, and, what led to these initiatives ending. The experience of the Scottish Migrants Network is detailed in appendix 7.

The scoping exercise aimed to be genuinely exploratory. The conversations were informal aiming to encourage people to speak candidly from the base of their experience. Their experiences are often closely informed by their work for particular organisations. However, the informal, individual nature

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<sup>8</sup> The Flyer is included in appendix 1 and a list of organisations contacted in appendix 8.

<sup>9</sup> These were: the Citizens, Nations and Migration Network (CNaM) (University of Edinburgh), the Glasgow Refugees Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNet) (University of Glasgow), the Migration and Mobilities Research Network (Edinburgh Napier University, and networks operated by Citizens Advice Scotland and the Scottish Refugee Council.

<sup>10</sup> The list of the organisational affiliation of the conversation partners is at appendix 2

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Kyambi was herself involved in Migrants Rights Scotland, including some time as a director.

of the conversations means that the views expressed should not be taken to represent the formal view any organisation.

In addition to these scoping conversations, two consultative workshops were held. These sought views among practitioners in Aberdeen and Glasgow. This brought into the scoping work the views of a further 20 people spanning 15 organisations.<sup>12</sup> Précis of those discussions can be found in appendices 5 and 6. A third consultative workshop was to be held in Inverness, but this had to be cancelled due to a lack of attendees. A follow-up interview with one of those invited discussed the reasons behind this lack of attendees, particularly as there had been interest in the project on twitter and by email. This experience helped bring to light a challenge that any migration policy role on Scotland will face in securing engagement across all parts of Scotland, namely the very limited capacity within smaller organisations across the country to engage with such work.

### What need is there for greater policy capacity on migration in Scotland?

Evidence of demand for more policy capacity on migration in Scotland was the clearest finding of the scoping work. While conversation partners had less clear ideas on what types of work this included, the challenges and opportunities it presented and how and where this should be undertaken, the sense of an urgent need for more policy work on migration to take place in Scotland was palpable. All of the partners spoken to during the scoping exercise confirmed a need for greater capacity on migration policy in Scotland. Perhaps the best description offered on the current landscape was that Scotland-focused policy work on migration represented a: *“big policy space and a low base of actions”*. This sense that there was a lot that could be, or even should be, done on migration policy in Scotland and little policy work on migration being done in some ways made the scoping exercise more challenging as there is a such wealth of ideas and expectations that it becomes difficult to disentangle and prioritise. The conversation partners had many different ideas of what could be done, some wanted immediate clarity as to what this might mean and when it would happen. There were however also a few conversation partners, particularly those involved in support or service delivery, who had difficulty envisaging what policy work entailed and what it might achieve. Some seemed wary of getting their hopes up. Others explained that as they did not experience policy work within their organisations and were not aware of any policy work on migration elsewhere and so found it hard to envisage. The contrast between the discussions at the two consultation workshops evidences the some of the variety of these conversations.<sup>13</sup> Each workshop ended up focusing on very different aspects of the immigration system in line with the areas in which the participants involved were active. More generally, it is striking that many conversation partners - particularly those in senior positions whom one might have expected to be more circumspect - attached superlatives to their description of the need for more capacity on migration policy in Scotland. For example, describing the gap or need for migration policy as *‘a huge shortage’*, an *‘increasingly urgent need’* or seeing *‘significant scope’* for more work.

Adding to the strength of the case of the need for more policy capacity on migration in Scotland some conversation partners were able to give indicators of such a need. One organisation had been approached by the Scottish government to expand its remit into working on migration policy, but decided against so doing for organisational reasons. The Scottish Government’s expanded capacity on migration and population both in terms of establishing a dedicated team within the civil service and commissioning the independent expert advisory group was given as an example the rising salience of

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<sup>12</sup> Lists of the organisational affiliations of the consultative workshop participants are at appendices 3 and 4

<sup>13</sup> See appendices 5 and 6.

these issues in both political and policy terms and the need for greater capacity within government. The Scottish Government confirmed that it would welcome more non-governmental work on migration policy in Scotland. Another conversation partner reported that their organisation had seen a *'demand for more Scotland specific analysis'* with requests to provide supplementary analysis disaggregating Scotland-specific data or being asked to replicate analysis on England and Wales for Scotland specifically. They noted that their organisation's *"focus and priorities are UK-wide. This often means we do not have the capacity to look at issues that would be higher priority if one considered Scotland specifically."*

Some partners referenced Brexit and the needs of EEA nationals as adding increased urgency to the case for building more policy capacity on migration in Scotland. One said: *"Soon we'll need more representation, theres no capacity to represent our [EEA nationals] views in a policy sense. This is a welcome idea I think there is a great need for this."*

Several conversation partners supported their view that increased capacity on migration policy was necessary by stating their interest in collaborating on this kind of work. For example, one reported that a recent consultation had discovered a proportion of their membership strongly in favour of doing more policy work, but that the organisation could not take this forward at present. They concluded: *"my sense is that this is needed and something we could link in well with."* Another offered to share operational data to help provide an evidence base for future policy work in this area.

Further partner comments evidence frustration that Scotland's more positive approach on immigration can remain within the realm of political rhetoric only. One expressed the hope that having more capacity on immigration policy would help inform and drive more substantive action supporting migrants and migration. *"We need to close the gap between policy makers and the people they affect. There is a real space within the devolved context to do that work."* They continued that there was a need to *"do more than criticise the UK government [on reserved immigration policy]. Scottish Government could do more to develop alternative approaches, within existing areas of devolved competency."* Another noted that with debate being so contentious and often focused on the growing divergence between Scotland and England it left little scope for *"sensible debate on how to tackle actual issues on the ground."*

Many of those who participated in the scoping exercise were unable to name any policy work on migration (outwith refugees and asylum) taking place in Scotland, with some stating they thought there was none. Others could name particular organisations that undertook work in a field that touched migration more generally or included migrants in some way. The impression was that work on migrants and migration in Scotland took place in a disjointed way and that many struggled to get an overview. Several partners suggested the need for better co-ordination of activity and the need to facilitate a better overview: *"having an organisation that maps policy work and activity would really help co-ordinate and avoid duplication and could foster co-operation."* It is notable that the work of the now defunct networks and platforms on migration in Scotland focused mainly on networking and co-ordinating the various actors in the field and that this in itself gave impetus to issue-specific actions - as well as providing a focal point for information and exchange.

The conversations with politicians unearthed a great deal of enthusiasm and support for the resource of Scotland-specific policy capacity on migration would provide. While the scoping only included politicians from two political parties both groups were very positive. The idea of building greater policy capacity on migration in Scotland was described as *"a desperately needed resource"* (Conservative MP) and *"urgently needed and very timely"* (SNP MP).



Most of the conversation partners were aware of increased divergence in views between Scotland and the rest of the UK on migration. Rather fewer were aware of the Scottish Government's increased civil service capacity on migration. While the conversation partners viewed positively the Scottish Government's statements and activity on immigration, some noted concern that a change in government, or a change in the government's approach, could lead to this key channel on migration into Whitehall and Westminster disappearing. *It would be useful to have a more neutral convenor for this [collating views from Scotland on migration], currently the Scottish government and COSLA draw together the public, private and third sector for discussion, although this does not translate into capacity to take those conversations into sustained and coordinated policy work. Longer term, we would benefit from an independent, non-governmental convenor – to encourage a broad range of contributors and ensure objectivity and accountability if – in future – the government takes a different position on migration to Scotland ."* Other conversation partners noted the need for there to be other voices in Scotland on these issues, particularly given the potential for the tenor of the debate to deteriorate: *"other voices would be very important."* Government conversation partners agreed that having other voices in the debate would be helpful to them in representing views from Scotland in various contexts and acknowledged that as government actors there were limitations on how they could engage on the issues.

With such a resoundingly positive response in the scoping exercise to the need for more policy capacity on migration in Scotland, it is perhaps necessary to be a little cautious in interpreting the findings of the scoping exercise. First of all, the conversation partners self-selected to participate. Therefore, it is more likely that they would be positively disposed to the project. Furthermore, we should be wary that some conversation partners may have equated having more policy capacity on migration in Scotland as leading straightforwardly to more positive views in the UK-level debate. Nonetheless, bearing those caveats in mind, it appears that for many the need for more policy capacity is rooted in the sense of policy processes at Westminster seeming too remote to influence from Scotland without more capacity and a clear gap in the current infrastructure on migration in Scotland. The support for more policy capacity was also rooted in the desire for more practical action to support migrants and migration in Scotland and to see more positive policy action and implementation come alongside positive political rhetoric. Many of the views that greater migration policy capacity was needed in Scotland were based on the acknowledgement that this space is currently remarkably underserved. Several reported that when their work touched on migration issues it was hampered by the lack of support and resources to inform it. Expertise on migration policy within Scotland is scarce and linking up with experts outside Scotland is complicated by differences in policy, practice and law on devolved issues. Many were keen to be able to draw on policy work that helps bridge that gap. Finally, it is significant that support for more policy capacity is particularly strong among people in senior roles who would have a good overview on the needs of the sector as a whole. The expressions of interest in partnership working and offers of access to data indicate that many key people and organisations are supportive and want to facilitate building more capacity.

In conclusion: the need for more capacity on migration policy emerged very clearly in the scoping exercise. It was unanimously expressed as a need by every conversation partner and these spanned a wide range of organisations. The case for it is strengthened by the unequivocal terms in which it was expressed by more senior level conversation partners. The scoping found concrete evidence both inside and outside Scotland of demand for Scotland-specific policy work in this area. While there has been some upscaling of capacity within government there remains a significant gap outside government that many want to see filled with some urgency. There was also a great deal of enthusiasm for this work to be undertaken and although no other organisations emerged as wanting to lead in developing it, some made concrete offers to contribute to it. Politicians across the key party-

political divide in Scotland were very enthusiastic. They were also candid about the urgency of the need for policy work on migration in Scotland. As time goes on and Brexit gets underway it is to be expected the divergence between the UK and Scottish administrations on immigration will further widen and therefore this need will continue to grow. However, even if the political calculus changes, the scoping exercise makes clear that there are several policy matters affecting migrants in Scotland that are falling into the gaps between reserved and devolved policy matters giving scope for policy work on those issues.

### What kinds of policy work?

The scoping exercise included discussion of what kinds of policy work any increased capacity on migration in Scotland should pursue. The responses covered wide-ranging ground. This suggests how 'migration policy work' was understood differed among conversation partners. Given the exploratory nature of the scoping work the focus in the conversations was to draw out these different visions, rather than pre-determining ideas from the outset by pursuing a more structured format. The drawback of this approach is that the scoping uncovered an amorphous, and at times incongruous, range of suggestions. To mitigate this, the following section groups the different visions and roles conversation partners imagined as 'migration policy work' under different headings. It is not intended to suggest that the conversation partners thought in terms of these headings, nor that all of these functions would need to be pursued in building migration policy capacity in Scotland. Instead the headings are intended to provide some structure to help think through the wealth of points raised over the course of the scoping work.

#### 1. Mapping work on migration and providing a platform for dialogue

Many conversation partners noted a lack of overview as hampering work on migrants and migration in Scotland. They expressed the need for a central repository of the projects and programmes across Scotland. They thought this would allow for better orientation and information on what work was underway, as well as provide more insight into possible partners for collaboration. Several pointed out that one of the difficulties in getting a handle on what work was going on was that often such work was carried out under different labels and by different types of partners. For example, work on migrants and migration in Scotland could be ongoing as work on equalities, human rights, integration, poverty and so on. While Scotland's size makes it easier for different actors to get an overview, it seems that networks often fall into clusters and difficulties making connections persist. Alongside this, many voiced the desire for a platform or network that could more proactively promote contact between different organisations. This suggests that there is scope to foster more networking that allows organisations to explore potential synergies in both planned projects and ongoing work. The experience of previous networks on migration<sup>14</sup> in Scotland shows a good measure of interest in and success with these initiatives bringing together key actors on specific issues. However, there was little appetite for an organisation trying to represent migrants in Scotland generally in a more formal representative way. One MP was interested to see a body emerge that could represent the views of migrants in Scotland as a group. However, several other conversation partners voiced scepticism of a formally representative approach. Some referenced previous experiences of pursuing collective or joint action as having the potential to get very difficult given the heterogeneity of views and complexity of the issues. Nonetheless, short of representativeness, there are strong examples of the benefits of

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<sup>14</sup> Scottish Migrants Network and Migrants Rights Scotland.

collaboration and information sharing that could be supported by a network that helps different actors navigate the sector and can provide impetus and focus.

## 2. Policy work on the relationship between reserved and devolved policy matters

Most conversation partners saw addressing the relationship between reserved and devolved policy areas as a particularly fruitful area for work on migration policy in Scotland. Those areas where migrants living in Scotland are affected by devolved policy matters that diverge from England are prone to being poorly understood and, at times, are genuinely unclear. Expertise often falls into particular silos such as housing, health, while expertise on immigration rules tends to lack in-depth knowledge of Scotland-specific differences in devolved areas. Many conversation partners reported experiencing difficulties negotiating this gap. They advised that they saw opportunity for helpful work in this area and that more work was needed. For example, one noted: *“We often come across authorities not using the proper definition of public services. Often material is not pooled together enough across health, social care and so on. Now that social security is more devolved there will be more scope for divergence on entitlement.”*

Others described the challenges they experienced when engaging with mainstream actors in their fields. They thought that more policy capacity on migration in Scotland could help fill a valuable role helping make connections between work focused on migrants and linking into mainstream devolved policy areas.

Many other conversation partners expressed the wish to see more done to support migrants in Scotland within the scope of existing powers and a desire to see more practical action in Scotland to go along with the more positive rhetoric. In this sense support for policy work on the bridge between reserved and devolved policy areas also advocated for better implementation of pro-migrant politics into policies and on the ground action that improves the lives of migrants in Scotland and the communities they live in.

## 3. Integrating concerns from Scotland into UK policymaking on immigration.

Many conversation partners saw the need for greater feedback from Scotland into UK policymaking on immigration. Many thought that concerns from Scotland about population challenges and for a more positive approach to migration as not resonating sufficiently at UK level. There was dismay that the more positive approach to migration within Scottish politics found little reflection at UK level. Many saw a need for greater engagement from within Scotland with UK policymakers and the general public to help those arguments find greater purchase. Some also voiced concerns that the current main actors providing feedback to the Migration Advisory Committee and into Home Office consultations were government. As well as having concerns that this set up was too vulnerable to political change, it was thought that government actors were, at times, constrained in their remit and effectiveness by virtue of being government actors. Several conversation partners wanted to see a greater variety of voices making those arguments. This was seen as increasing the effectiveness of those arguments in itself by adding different voices to the discussion, as well as diversifying and strengthening those arguments. Conversation partners within government were supportive of the need for a greater of variety of organisations having the capacity to engage with UK level immigration policy processes.

#### 4. Political brokering on migration in Scotland

Several conversation partners, particularly the politicians, commented on the lack of a forum for political dialogue on migration in Scotland. With such debates held mainly at Westminster,<sup>15</sup> politicians voiced the need to have a 'safe space' to engage with each other on this topic. Many felt that with immigration being a controversial topic, as well as a complex one, they had little opportunity for dialogue within and across party lines that could help flesh out commonalities and differences in approaches and views on immigration in Scotland. A few politicians voiced fears that political gaming could quickly result in a shift to a more polarised, and even hostile, debate in Scotland. One SNP MP noted: "*there is no space where we can work together through the issues*". Scottish Conservative MPs were also eager for the opportunity to engage in substantive discussion. There is currently a cross party consensus in Scotland on the need for a more positive approach to immigration.<sup>16</sup> This provides the opportunity to pursue more constructive dialogue on migration at the Scottish level in a way that has not been possible at UK level for some time.

#### 5. Developing immigration policy options in the event of Scottish independence

A few conversation partners also saw policy work on immigration in Scotland as potentially providing analysis to inform the options for Scottish immigration policy in the event that Scotland should become an independent country. This was most prevalently expressed among SNP MPs. While SNP MPs were very enthusiastic about that need, there seemed to be some reluctance among other conversation partners towards the idea of more migration policy capacity for the same reason. The main grouping of views seemed to be in the middle: in favour of a greater role for Scotland in shaping immigration policy, but not wanting this support for migration policy capacity in Scotland to be perceived as straightforward support for Scottish independence.

To sum up: while it is clear that this scoping exercise found strong evidence on the need for greater migration policy capacity in Scotland, what is imagined by migration policy capacity spans a wide range of possible actions. In building greater policy capacity it will be necessary to think carefully which of these types of work go together and which will need to be separated out. There needs to be consideration of whether advocacy roles can be sufficiently balanced against the need to for expertise to be viewed as balanced and non-partisan. How to ensure this policy work remains timely and agile enough to secure impact, without sacrificing the quality of underpinning research. How to keep influencing work engaged with grassroots concerns without becoming captive to particular groups. Perhaps it is useful in thinking through the options to separate policy work into two main types of action. On the one hand, I think there is 'primary' policy work understood as the research and analysis focused on immigration policy, this includes clarifying the interface between immigration policy and devolved policy areas. On the other hand, there is 'secondary' policy work focused on influencing, advocacy, facilitating networks and dialogue and informing implementation. Arguably, the priority in building policy capacity should be the 'primary' policy work, with the view that this will increase the scope for 'secondary' policy work across a range of organisations through the resource such 'primary'

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<sup>15</sup> Although there have in recent years been Scottish Parliament debates and inquiries on immigration reflecting the need for space for such discussion in Scotland. E.g.: Scottish Parliament Immigration Inquiry 2017 and the Scottish Parliament Debate on the Impact of the UK Government's Planned Immigration Policy 2019

<sup>16</sup> See for instance <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/immigration-backlash-scottish-tory-leader-21539191>

policy work provides. However, even if pursuing purely 'primary' policy work there will be the need to include some 'secondary' policy activities as this helps inform and focus the 'primary' policy work ensuring it remains closely informed by knowledge of both grassroots priorities and political opportunities. There is also the danger that too strong a focus on 'secondary' policy activity can have the effect of compromising 'primary' policy work when the result is that it appears overly partisan or gets too network driven or contentless.

## Challenges

The scoping conversations unearthed a number of challenges for building greater policy capacity on migration in Scotland. These are grouped under headings below. Once again, the groupings are superimposed on a wide range of concerns emerging in the course of the conversations.

### 1. Focus: whom should migration policy capacity seek to influence?

The most frequently voiced challenge to developing more migration policy capacity in Scotland was the question of the potential targets of such policy work. Whom should it seek to influence? Many conversation partners noted the difficulty for migration policy work in Scotland in accessing policy decisionmakers on immigration as these are based in London. Most conversation partners were familiar only with policy work in Scotland that seeks to influence and inform policy decisionmakers in Scotland (the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish government or local government in Scotland). With immigration a reserved matter, conversation partners questioned how policy work on migration in Scotland could effectively access policymakers outside Scotland. It seems clear that to do so migration policy work in Scotland would need to be well-networked into the immigration policy environment that exists for the UK as a whole and have the resources needed to sustain those networks.

Given this difficulty in accessing UK-level policy decisionmakers, some conversation partners felt that migration policy capacity in Scotland should also help inform and finesse the policy positions taken by Scottish actors currently representing views from Scotland at UK level. They believed this would help these actors to better represent Scottish views and thereby strengthen the kind of engagement on migration policy currently undertaken. A few thought that the main target should be the Scottish Parliament, but others reported that their past experience of engaging with the Scottish Parliament had not yielded much in terms of results and pointed out the contradiction of spending a lot of time working on influencing a body that has no direct decision making power on the issue. Nonetheless, working to influence a wider range of stakeholders can be seen as part of building up a groundswell of opinion that could then be brought to bear on UK-level decision makers.

Many of the conversation partners were keen for increased policy capacity on migration to also impact on public understanding of migration. They thought better public understanding would reduce hostility to immigration and help sustain and promote the positive political consensus in Scotland. However, many seemed bit weary and wary of hoping for too much in terms of shifting public attitudes.

### 2. Deciding priorities

A second set of challenges in developing migration policy work in Scotland was seen to be the complexity and diversity of the areas that it would need to engage with. Relevant policy work could require expertise across a wide range of devolved policy areas that impact on migration and the lives of migrants in Scotland. The variety of concerns raised and the varied

understandings of what increased policy capacity on migration could involve presents challenges in terms of the need to focus and prioritise. There were various suggestions on how to determine priorities. One partner advised: *“Immigration policy is vast but focus on how the issues materialise in the devolved context”* in order to prioritise. Several others suggested collaborative work that brings together partners with expertise in the different areas would be a way to cover the breadth of the terrain. Many stressed the need for such policy work to be well-grounded in the specific policy issues migration raises in Scotland such as demographic challenges and migration into rural and remote areas.

### 3. Engagement and capacity

Turning towards the engagement and dialogue aspect of policy work reveals another set of challenges. The cross-cutting nature of migration means there is a potentially very large number of organisations and stakeholders that could be engaged with and this could be a strain on resources. Furthermore, the scoping exercise revealed capacity constraints within those organisations that would ideally feed into and engage with this work in Scotland. The experience of trying to engage with organisations in the north east of Scotland revealed a very constrained capacity to engage on migration policy issues to the extent that it was not possible to hold the consultative workshop planned in Inverness. A follow-up conversation with one of the invitees shed more light on the restricted capacity of third sector organisations in the region to engage on general policy matters: *“it’s difficult to go to events that are interesting but not immediately relevant.”* They described that despite immigration being a *‘huge issue’* in the region with employers and others having a *‘huge appetite’* for immigration to support their workforce needs, many organisations did not work on policy issues and would have difficulty justifying time away from the support and advice work they do to engage with policy work. But this was qualified with the observation that if an event or project was clearly focused on a priority issue that could secure engagement, despite the capacity constraints. While the north east of Scotland provided the clearest example of very constrained capacity, the issue holds for Scotland as a whole. The scoping exercise discovered that while many organisations are interested and enthusiastic about expanding policy capacity on migration in Scotland, many may lack the capacity to engage with such work in a sustained way. How to build this kind of complementary capacity will need to be considered further.

Throughout the scoping exercise engagement with partners where interest was expected did not always materialise. For instance, it was not possible to speak to any trades unions in Scotland to get their views. Race equality organisations also did not engage. There is no way to tell whether this lack of engagement represents anything significant regarding their views on expanding migration policy capacity in Scotland. Other conversation partners commented that *“BME groups can feel a bit crowded out when race equality is still largely unrealised in our communities.”* While some of this relates to concern about funding streams, the concerns are wider than funding competition: *“A focus on migration can have the effect of crowding out BME groups from the policy space where it reorients the policy agenda from talking about race equality.”* However, it should also be noted that Scottish race equality organisations and trades unions offered substantive support to the efforts of previous networks and initiatives on migration in Scotland.

### 4. Credibility and legitimacy

Another challenge that emerged through the scoping conversations was the need establish sufficient credibility and legitimacy to be heard. Part of the difficulty centres on the question the relevance of such work in Scotland. One conversation partner noted that a key challenge

will be *“the mistaken perception – driven by the dynamic between reserved and devolved matters - that immigration is not a Scottish ‘thing’ and that migration is too marginal an issue.”*

One way to establish legitimacy would be to act as a voice representing migrants in Scotland. However, many conversation partners saw difficulties in trying to be a body that sought to represent migrants as a group. Most thought migrants’ views and priorities would be too different and conflicting to provide a clear steer for action in many cases – although the current level of hostility to immigration does have a unifying effect that could make this easier than it has been in the past. Furthermore, the difficulty of acting as a representative organisation should not be seen as disqualifying the potential for fostering a network that brings together a range of different partners. Those arguing against a representative function often argued in support of a network without prompting.

Another way to establish credibility is by supporting policy arguments with good quality research evidence and robust analysis. This route to credibility is implied in the following quote: *“Scotland having a voice at all in the debate. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament will contribute but that will be in the political space. But in the policy space there is a lack of analysis and evidence to contribute to the debate.”* On that front success will depend to a great extent on the quality of the research and analysis and on access to relevant data and information to support this, including strong networks that can feed in information from the grassroots regarding issues arising on the ground.

Reviewing the points that emerged from the conversations and workshops one can draw the following conclusions. The first is that in terms of focus, policy work should always seek to address the decision makers on the issue under discussion as its primary aim. However, this does not preclude using the findings from such work more widely and sharing them with other partners who will have their own pathways to influence. The decision on focus is not an either/or decision, but ideally policy roles on migration in Scotland will have adequate time and resource to build and sustain UK-level networks. The challenge of setting priorities given finite resources is a challenge for all organisations. One way of determining priorities when building policy capacity on migration in Scotland would be to aim to focus on those issues that are distinctive to Scotland and not covered more generally at UK level. It would also be most useful to focus on those issues where working in Scotland opens up distinct opportunities not available at UK level. In this way more Scotland-focused migration policy capacity is more likely to add value to migration policy discussion in Scotland and make a contribution at UK level. In terms of developing networks and engagement, this will both focus and inform priorities. The key is that engagement and networks need to link up with areas of substantive policy work. There should be the effort to engage across the whole of Scotland, but such efforts will only succeed if they are based on working on issues that are of genuine interest and relevance across the whole of Scotland. The capacity restrictions within other organisations present a challenge that is difficult to quantify at present as this obstacle was uncovered in the process the scoping work and not investigated in depth. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate how much of a barrier it represents at this stage. However, it presents more of an obstacle to ‘secondary’ policy work that operates through engagement and dialogue, than it does to ‘primary’ policy work where a lot can be achieved through research and analysis. However, the constraint that limited sector capacity poses and how to address it should be reviewed over time. It is possible that the resource greater policy capacity on migration in Scotland offers will lead to some expansion in capacity in potential partner organisations as types of action that are currently out of reach become increasingly possible. Finally, on the challenge of demonstrating the relevance of pursuing work on migration policy in Scotland, the current sharp divergence of

approach between Westminster and Holyrood strengthens the case for needing more Scotland-specific policy work in this area. Should these begin to converge again, there will still remain in Scotland a significant gap in the infrastructure between the work underway on asylum and refugees and what exists on migration more generally. So there would be work to do on implementation and on the relationship and gaps between devolved and reserved matters, even if the two governments came into complete alignment on immigration policy – a prospect that in the immediate future seems fairly remote.

## Opportunities

The strong expression of demand for greater migration policy capacity in Scotland described above indicates a wealth of opportunity, particularly given the low base of policy activity currently in this area. While there is a lot that could be done, this section will focus more tightly on what such policy capacity could hope to change. These opportunities to effect change can be grouped around three headings: supporting dialogue and building networks, providing analysis, and, informing practical action.

### 1. Supporting dialogue and building networks

Building a platform or network for current partners can enable better oversight, making all partners more informed, and thereby more effective, in their work on migration and migrants in Scotland. Several partners expressed a wish to have a better overview of the field and an opportunity to be brought together. They thought this would support better collaboration and partnerships, as well as prevent duplication. The experience of the previous networks and platforms is encouraging in that they did manage to foster collaboration and action by bringing partners together.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as one fed back for a long time after their network's closure, they continued to be approached by organisations and individuals interested in joining the network.

Conversations with politicians also revealed a need among politicians from SNP and Conservative parties in Scotland for opportunities to engage in dialogue on migration, especially within a 'safe space'. The political landscape in Scotland offers the opportunity to engage in potentially more constructive dialogue with politicians of all parties than is currently possible at UK-level. While the recent election results present less of a cross-party spread than previously, this still provides a unique, and as yet under-utilised, opportunity for positive contact with politicians on migration across all the main parties.

### 2. Providing analysis

One conversation partner noted that while the political space on migration is fairly active the policy space remains under resourced: "*There is a lack of analysis.*" Government actors confirmed their need for better analysis and are taking steps to address this. Nonetheless it remains the case that there is a need for more analysis on migration to Scotland and a need for more voices making informed interventions from outside government. This would support greater reach of a Scottish perspective on migration within policy making at UK level by better informing and supporting the current actors that relay Scottish positions on migration to UK level policy makers. It could also supplement such relays by building direct links into policymaking discussion at UK level and would have the advantage of being less constrained than government intermediaries. In the current political context, non-governmental actors

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<sup>17</sup> See appendix 7 on the experience of the Scottish Migrants Network



may also be freer from the perception that interventions on migration from Scotland relate primarily to constitutional debates on devolution. However, the legitimacy of any additional voice or voices on migration policy in Scotland will depend on the quality of the research and analysis done to reach particular positions or the degree to which they would be seen as representative of views across Scotland. The former would probably provide an easier route to legitimacy than the latter, at least in the short term, as building up a membership or representative profile among migrant groups or community organisations would take time especially given the constrained capacity of organisations to take part in policy initiatives.

Furthermore, undertaking policy analysis on migration and migrants in Scotland opens up the opportunity to explore further particular migration issues that are of more significance in Scotland currently receive little coverage within UK-level immigration debates and analysis. For instance, the challenges of migrant integration within rural or remote locations is a more relevant issue in Scotland than for the UK as a whole. Similarly, the interrelation between migration and population are more salient in Scotland than the rest of the UK and again more capacity in Scotland would enable this to be more strongly articulated. Having more capacity in Scotland on migration could allow the space to explore Scotland-specific migration issues in more depth and suggest possible solutions. The scoping work revealed that at UK-level there is currently not the capacity to do more work on these more marginal issues that are of particular relevance in Scotland.

### 3. Informing practical action

Several conversation partners expressed frustration that despite the positive rhetoric on migration there remained a lack of practical action, and often a lack of clarity, on issues negatively impacting on migrants in Scotland. Having more capacity on migration policy in Scotland would provide an opportunity to delve into areas of uncertainty between devolved and reserved policy matters and determine ways forward. Often actions on devolved policy areas such as housing, health, children stall because expertise sits in different silos and there is no impetus or opportunity to pool knowledge and decide a course of action. More migration policy capacity would help bring together diverse areas of expertise in focused ways, supplementing it with research where necessary, to develop solutions to the issues facing migrants and the communities they are part of. Feedback from conversations with MPs suggests that securing impact for such interventions is achievable in terms of securing political backing.

There is a great deal of enthusiasm for what more policy capacity on migration in Scotland could achieve. However, planning to build greater policy capacity on migration in Scotland should be cautious of over-promising what this can deliver in terms of changing the pervasive hostility and negative approach to migration that currently characterises UK politics and policymaking. However, there are also clear opportunities and advantages to be gained as outlined above. Building greater policy capacity on migration in Scotland provides the opportunity to do work on currently underexplored aspects and impacts of migration policy that are particularly pertinent to Scotland. In so doing there is the possibility that the positive character of the debate and leadership on immigration in Scotland is both sustained going forwards and for this to become more visible at UK level.

## How best to develop greater capacity on migration policy in Scotland?

No partners had clear views of how the need for more capacity on migration policy in Scotland should be met. Many conversation partners simply acknowledged that they did not know how this should be done. No existing organisation was seen to offer a obvious base for where such capacity should be housed. The views that were expressed are well captured in the following: *“No real organisation comes to mind for where role should be placed. In fact, the problem with placing role in only one institution is that that organisations remit will crowd out other aspects.”* Most thought that it would be best to build independent capacity outside the existing landscape of organisations, but that such an organisation should seek to work closely across a range of organisations and be deliberate to work with organisations that work on equalities, human rights and integration. In terms of the structure for developing greater policy capacity in Scotland one partner had some concrete observations: *“It would be good if there was the capacity for some sort of think tank approach. The question is whether Scotland is big enough to support this....Otherwise perhaps a university in Scotland, like a Migration Observatory approach.”*

Voices in favour of a representative organisation were just one. Some feedback stressed the difficulties and drawbacks of trying to work in a more formally representative way. However, many were strongly in support of information sharing and network building. Many thought that without the need to agree to common positions, more activity bringing different partners together would increase the scope for partnership working and co-production in this area. This tallies with the experience of previous efforts: both the Scottish Migrants Network and Migrants Rights Scotland reported positive feedback and results emerging from their work connecting the different actors.<sup>18</sup> Several noted that work on migration policy in Scotland would need to engage with public, private and third sectors: *“Important that this role engages all sectors: public, private and third sector. Often engagement stays within particular groups or sectors, this would need to work across.”*

In terms of geographic focus, many partners were keen to see migration policy work on Scotland encompass working across the whole of Scotland and prioritising policy issues that arose in Scotland from the ground up. They noted the need for policy work to set its priorities in relation to the issues arising in Scotland and not to be simply reactive to a migration policy agenda set in London or elsewhere. Some organisations offered substantive solutions for how this could be achieved including access to operational data to inform policy work. Others suggested building a strong network with organisations that could provide information on the key issues arising on the ground.

Many partners were keen that migration policy work should engage with partners across the whole of Scotland, despite the fact that the majority of migrants and organisations working on migration are located in the central belt. However, the scoping work also discovered that organisations and individuals based farther afield found it difficult to tap into the work going on currently and are likely to find it difficult to engage with future policy work on migration in Scotland. Part of the solution would be for increased policy capacity to make a sustained and deliberate effort to engage across Scotland, particularly to find issues of relevance to partners outside the central belt. There is scope here to explore ways of working together remotely to promote inclusivity, but contain costs. Nonetheless, the capacity that exists within the sector and adjacent partners to engage with migration policy work will need to be explored in practice. Funding constraints mean many organisations are quite stretched in fulfilling their existing remit. It may prove difficult for them to find the resources and capacity to engage in policy work on migration driven by other organisations. There may be a need to resource greater capacity across a wider range of organisations to enable constructive engagement to take

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<sup>18</sup> see further appendix 7 on the Scottish Migrants Network experience

place. Otherwise it is possible to factor in that there exist particular capacity constraints to engagement and plan to do work that is less reliant on such engagement, but seeks over time to build capacity for more engagement in the future.

### Conclusions and Next Steps

What has emerged most clearly in the course of the scoping work is a wealth of enthusiasm and tangible urgency regarding the need to develop more policy capacity on migration in Scotland. The gap in the infrastructure is seen widely as self-evident. Two organisations have reported having considered developing policy capacity themselves recently in response, but decided against stepping into that role because it is outside their remit and expertise. The sense of an increasingly urgent need for more migration policy capacity looks set to increase the further the Scottish and UK government's approaches diverge. It will be greatly exacerbated by the end of free movement in 2021. However, the scoping yielded far less clarity on how capacity on migration policy should be built and no clear way forward emerges from the responses. This exercise has nonetheless brought together thinking on the prospects for such migration policy work in Scotland, the challenges it faces and the opportunities it offers. This can help inform deliberations for how to go about building policy capacity. Some ways forward will be better suited to addressing particular difficulties or taking advantages of certain opportunities than others, although no single form provides all of the solutions.

The table below tries to provide an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the three main options. These are not exhaustive and there is nothing to preclude funding a mixture of different approaches. However, there should be consideration of the fact that some policy functions sit better together than others. In each case there is the option of providing additional resource to existing organisations or setting up something new. Both options have drawbacks: existing organisations may find it difficult to properly incorporate a new remit, while setting up a new organisation requires establishing appropriate governance, operations, networks and profile. Funding policy capacity across a range of organisations is also possible, but care should be taken to ensure these roles have a means of co-ordinating and co-operating, rather than competing.

Table of options by strengths and weaknesses

Type of Organisation	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Centre within a university</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More direct access to academic research.</li> <li>• Institutional affiliation supports credibility.</li> <li>• Ability to draw on the institutional support of a larger institution.</li> <li>• Existing academic centres/networks on migration within Scottish universities could be expanded.</li> <li>• Establishing a new centre within a university would benefit from being housed within a larger institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research focus of universities can be in tension with more directly policy-focused work.</li> <li>• Existing centres/networks currently have limited involvement in influencing migration policy.</li> <li>• Will need to develop engagement with grassroots on migration in Scotland.</li> <li>• Universities may be cautious about pursuing what might appear to be advocacy work.</li> <li>• Establishing a new centre within a Scottish university will require buy-in from the institution.</li> </ul>
<b>Think tank</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong focus on policy research and analysis.</li> <li>• Ability to move flexibly between policy research and influencing functions.</li> <li>• Recognised platform for political brokering.</li> <li>• Thinktanks in Scotland have all done some work on migration in recent years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think tanks in Scotland are small - makes it difficult to justify/sustain work on a specialist topic like migration.</li> <li>• Need to assure the quality of research to maintain credibility.</li> <li>• Will need to develop engagement with grassroots work on migration in Scotland.</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong links to grassroots organisations and migrants themselves.</li> <li>• Engagement in legal or support work can provide an evidence base for policy work</li> <li>• Option to develop policy capacity within an existing organisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy organisations can be perceived as overly partisan on migration.</li> <li>• Limited capacity within existing organisations is a barrier to growing a network or membership organisation.</li> <li>• No existing advocacy organisation on migration in Scotland, so would require an extension of remit.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 1: Flyer used for the Migration Policy Scotland Scoping Project

### Building policy capacity on immigration in Scotland



The Migration Policy Scotland project explores the scope for increasing policy capacity on migration in Scotland.

We are organising meetings and conversations to discuss the options for building policy and influencing capacity in Scotland. We want to find out how migration policy work could best link up with grassroots and service delivery organisations to ensure it reflects experiences and issues on the ground.

If you are a migrant organisation, an organisation or individual working with migrants, or working on issues affected by migration, please contact:

[sarah@migrationpolicyscotland.org.uk](mailto:sarah@migrationpolicyscotland.org.uk)

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## Appendix 2: List of the organisational affiliations of conversation partners

Academic, Scottish University  
Aberdeen City Council  
Citizens Advice Scotland  
Cosla Strategic Migration Project  
CPAG Scotland  
Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council  
Equality and Human Rights Commission (Scotland)  
FENIKS  
Grampian Regional Equalities Council  
Just Right Scotland  
Maryhill Integration Network  
Migrant Voice  
Migration Observatory  
Migrants Rights Scotland  
Red Cross  
Scottish Council for Development and Industry  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
Scottish Parliament  
Scottish Government  
Scottish Members of Parliament (2 Conservative Party MPs, 4 Scottish Nationalist Party MPs)  
Scottish Migrants Network  
Scottish Refugee Council  
South East Integration Network (Glasgow)  
Worker's Educational Association

### Appendix 3: List of organisational affiliations of Consultation Workshop participants in Aberdeen

Aberdeen Cyrenians  
Grampian Regional Equality Council  
Home Start Aberdeen  
Kincardine and Mearns CAB  
Shelter Scotland

### Appendix 4: List of organisational affiliations of Consultation Workshop participants in Glasgow

Castlemilk Community Church  
Govan Community Church  
Home Start Glasgow South  
Freedom From Torture  
Maryhill Integration Network  
Migrant Voice  
Student Nurse  
South East Integration Network Glasgow  
The Well Cultural Resource Centre  
Women Support Project

### Appendix 5: Aberdeen Consultative Workshop

The consultative workshop in Aberdeen had 9 participants from 5 organisations. The participants were drawn from the No Recourse to Public Funds Network North East. The discussion on the need for migration policy capacity in Scotland was underpinned chiefly by concerns about Brexit and the impact on EEA nationals. Fears about the future immigration system were prevalent and participants thought that more migrants would be concerned about their status in the future. Therefore, they thought there was a growing need to represent migrants in Scotland in some way. Some noted that that government in Scotland was more receptive to positive approaches to migration saw this as linked to challenges such as brain drain and ageing population. However, they wondered how this could translate into more positive policy positions given that immigration was a reserved matter. They also mentioned wanting to see more joined up work on migration in Scotland and an increased focus on groups outside of asylum seekers and refugees. There was a general sense of wanting more avenues for engaging on migration policy and frustration that they could not participate more fully in those networks that did exist, such as Cosla Strategic Migration Partnership whose meetings were generally confined to local authorities.

**Challenges:** Many felt it would be difficult to engage migrant stakeholders and that it would be challenging and costly to build an infrastructure that could engage with a range of organisations across Scotland on migration. The hostility of current government policy was seen as a further challenge with some noting that stigma and hostility towards migrants on both left and right would make policy work difficult. Austerity and funding constraints were also mentioned as problematic in the sense that spending money on migration-related work or capacity building could lead to the sense that the money would be better spent elsewhere on 'Scottish' policy issues.

**Opportunities:** participants pointed out several areas where more joined up work was necessary and where gaps in provision needed to be addressed. In particular: on homelessness and housing rights, domestic violence, welfare rights, the need for more advice and assistance services and the challenge

of making provisions link up across the devolved/reserved fault line. Participants also saw opportunity for migration policy work to join up with existing frameworks and priorities on human rights and equality. One mentioned that having more capacity could lead to exploring new ways of addressing the challenges such as harm reduction approaches (reducing harm to migrants). Another thought that working on workers' rights or labour exploitation could offer new ways of addressing problems that were not really being looked from that perspective in the UK-level debate.

The participants reported that they found it *'difficult to really imagine how more policy capacity could work, not that it's a bad idea, but that it's a lot to think through and could be really huge'*. At the same time some sounded a note of caution that a lack of impact from such policy work could add to a *'feeling of futility among people at the coal face that their views don't matter if [they] are not taken forward.'*

## Appendix 6: Glasgow Consultative workshop

The Glasgow workshop comprised 11 participants from 10 organisations. This group found it difficult to think of any examples of migration policy work done in Scotland, but did mention the role of CoSLA SMP in this regard. Some were aware of proposals advocating for greater regionalisation of the UK immigration system. They thought having more immigration powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament would be good route to securing greater influence for Scottish views on immigration policy. Many found it difficult to think of areas of immigration policy outside policies affecting asylum seekers and refugees - the area of work in which they were mainly engaged.

**Challenges:** The greatest constraints this group saw in terms of working to building capacity in Scotland on migration policy was how such efforts could influence policy makers in London that they had few networks to. Many were unsure, but interested, as to whether such a thing could be done: *'how can we engage with them all the way over there [London]'*. Some suggested that a better alternative would be to focus on influencing the Scottish Parliament, particularly by engaging with some of the cross-party groups. They also thought that policy makers in London were too hostile on immigration to be significantly moved by policy influencing work from Scotland. There was scepticism that the more positive political rhetoric in Scotland could find any traction down South or even that this was more than just rhetoric. One participant argued strongly that given funding constraints and the level of need in communities it would be better to focus on service delivery than engage in efforts to influence policy that may not see success. The group generally agreed that funding constraints would be a big challenge to building policy capacity on migration in Scotland given funding in the sector as a whole.

**Opportunities:** Thinking about opportunities for policy work on migration in Scotland that could improve the lives of migrants in Scotland provided a number of suggestions. Many of these focused on devolved policy areas where participants saw scope for the Scottish Government to act. Improving access to healthcare, education and housing were all mentioned, as was more funding for ESOL and bilingual language services. Many thought arguing for greater devolution, or action on devolved areas, could allow practice in Scotland to diverge from that in England as they had experienced on Scottish approaches to the integration of asylum seekers.

The participants acknowledged that *'migrants, refugees and BME groups are underrepresented in policy making at national [Scottish] level'* and thought there was a need to build a stronger voice across all these groups. From their experience as a network (many were members of SEIN, Glasgow), they believed that developing a network on these issues was a good route to building a stronger voice.

## Appendix 7: Experience of the Scottish Migrants Network

Particularly relevant to this scoping exercise is the experience of previous efforts to set up networks bringing together various actors on migration. The past 15 years saw two main efforts to set up networks or organisations in Scotland focused on migrants or migration: Scottish Migrants Network and Migrants Rights Scotland. Both are no longer operating for a number of reasons and both were founded in part from the recognition, that outside refugee and asylum issues, there was little work on issues affecting migrants or relating to migration in Scotland. The scoping exercise was able to interview the core organisers of both initiatives and gain their reflections on the successes and challenges, as well as the reasons why these initiatives were abandoned. This section provides a short account of the experience of the Scottish Migrants Network.

The Scottish Migrants Network (SMN) was established in 2007 in recognition of a need for a network of organisations and groups *'to focus specifically on new migrant issues and to maximise the use of relationships and opportunities specific to Scotland in terms of advocating, information and practice sharing'*. The impetus for setting up this network was that a group of mainstream third sector organisations in Scotland, all working with migrants/on migration-issues within their broader remit at the time, saw a need for this work to be better co-ordinated and better focused on the specifics of the Scottish context. The key organisations involved were: Oxfam, Child Poverty Action Group, Positive Action in Housing and the Poverty Alliance. The network brought together a variety of groups and organisations across Scotland for regular meetings. At one point these meetings were every other month across a range of locations in Scotland. A wide range of organisations engaged with this network, but there was a core group of about 10 organisations that were able to attend regularly. SMN also organised two conferences in 2010 and 2011 and ran a poster campaign. The network stopped operating in 2011. While the network secured some funding for the conferences and campaign, the rest of its work remained informal and unfunded and eventually the pressure of sustaining SMN within this structure proved unsustainable given the core focus of the organisations involved was on other policy issues. Cuts to funding in the third sector meant these mainstream third sector organisations need to focus more closely on their remit and were unable to justify the time and resource for SMN to continue. The need for the network to initiate action on some of the key issues at the time also waned. As one organiser reflected, SMN had brought together relevant stakeholders on these issues: gangmaster regulation and labour exploitation, discrimination against Roma groups, and issues affecting EEA migrants. When these groupings went on to develop work to address those specific points of difficulty there was less urgent need for the network. This can be seen as a positive legacy of the network.

However, the main reason for disbanding SMN was a lack of the resource needed to drive this initiative onward. Similar was reported from Migrants Rights Scotland. Yet one organiser commented that after SMN was disbanded there were *'a number on enquiries wanting it to continue and for some time after a number of enquiries still really interested in being involved.'* Aside from funding and resource issues, one key challenge noted the logistics of organising the meetings especially as these moved between locations across Scotland in an effort to be inclusive. Another challenge was the sheer range of topics to be addressed within the scope of the network. The two conferences organised included specialist inputs on: volunteering, access to housing, workers' rights, researching migrant experiences, employability and training, access to health services, migrants in the healthcare workforce, social welfare rights and benefits, engaging with media and discussions with policymakers.



## Appendix 8: List of organisations contacted

Amina  
Amnesty International Scotland  
Association of Headteachers and Deputes Scotland  
Awaaz FM  
Bakhsh Foundation  
Bilingualism Matters  
Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS)  
Central and West Integration Network (Glasgow)  
Central Scotland Regional Equality Council  
Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Scotland  
Church of Scotland  
Citizens Advice Scotland  
Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)  
Commonweal  
Communication Workers Union Scotland  
Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Scotland  
Confucius Institute for Scotland  
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) Strategic Migration Partnership  
Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO) Scotland  
Cranhill Development Trust  
Cyrenians Supper Club  
David Hume Institute  
Dumfries and Galloway Multicultural Association  
Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC)  
Edinburgh Global, University of Edinburgh  
Ethnic Multicultural Research Institute (EMRI)  
EU Citizens Rights Project  
Equality and Human Rights Commission (Scotland)  
Faith Forum (subgroup of Interfaith Network)  
FENIKS  
Fife Migrants Forum  
Forth Valley Migrants Support Network  
Forth Valley Welcome  
Glasgow Afghan Society  
GMB Scotland  
Govan Community Project  
Govan Law Centre  
Grampian Regional Equality Council  
Highland Migrant and Refugee Advocacy  
Highland Multicultural Friends  
Highland One World  
Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
Highlife Highland  
Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) Scotland  
Interfaith Glasgow  
Inverclyde Community Development Trust  
Inverclyde Council Your Voice (Ethnic Minorities)  
JustRight Scotland  
Learning Curve (ESOL provision), Perth & Kinross  
Lithuanians in Scotland Association

Maryhill Integration Network  
Massive Outpouring of Love  
Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People project (MECOPP)  
Migrant Voice  
Migrants Organising for Rights and Empowerment  
Migrants Rights Scotland  
Migration Observatory  
Multicultural Family Base  
NASUWT Scotland  
National Union of Journalists Scotland  
National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union (RMT) Scotland  
North Lanarkshire Muslim Women Family Alliance  
Oxfam Scotland  
Paehedu  
Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (PKAVS) Minorities Hub  
Polish Cultural Festival Association  
Pollockshields Development Agency  
Positive Action in Housing  
Poverty Alliance  
Precarity Office Scotland  
Prospect Scotland  
Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) Scotland  
Rainbow Muslim Women's Group  
ReAct  
Red Cross  
Reform Scotland  
Refugee Survival Trust  
Renfrewshire Effort to Empower Minorities  
Rural Action Scotland  
Saheliya  
Score Scotland  
Scottish Chambers of Commerce  
Scottish Council for Development and Industry  
Scottish Council for Development and Industry Inverness  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
Scottish Enterprise  
Scottish Government  
Scottish Human Rights Commission  
Scottish Immigration Law Practitioners Association  
Scottish Migrants Network  
Scottish Parliament  
Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe)  
Scottish Refugee Council  
Scottish Trades Union Scotland (STUC)  
Sewing All Nations Together (Mosshill Community Church Paisley)  
Shakti Women's Aid  
Shepherd and Wedderburn  
Soul Riders  
South East Integration Network (Glasgow)  
The Unity Centre  
The Welcoming, Edinburgh

Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) Scotland  
UNISON Scotland  
UNITE Scotland  
VOICE Scotland  
West of Scotland Regional Equality Council  
Western Isles Citizens Advice Bureau  
Woodfarm Education Centre  
Worker's Educational Association

### About the author

Dr Sarah Kyambi is an independent immigration policy expert based in Edinburgh. She holds a PhD in Law and Social Theory. She has sound knowledge of legal and social research methods and experience of high-level policy influencing. Her work on immigration policy includes working at UK and EU levels with government, business, NGOs and funders. You can find out more about her at [www.sarahkyambi.com](http://www.sarahkyambi.com) and contact her on twitter @sarahkyambi.